

# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER I

### LAND AND PEOPLE

ÍRÁN, the chief scene of Firdausí's Sháhnáma, is bounded on the north by the Steppes, the Caspian Sea, and the Kúr and Rion rivers, on the south by the Indian Ocean, on the east by the valley of the Indus, and on the west by that of the Tigris and Euphrates, and by the Persian Gulf. At present it includes Persia, Afghanistán, Baluchistán, and small portions of Russia and Turkey.

It is a lofty and for the most part a rainless tableland traversed by numerous mountain-ranges divided from each other by flat plains and falling away toward the centre, which is a desert white with salt scurf or dun with powdery dust. The mountains are highest round the edges of the tableland and intercept most of the rainfall. Some moisture, however, finds its way even into the rainless region, where it gathers during winter on the higher hills in the form of snow. This snow-water is carefully husbanded, and distributed by means of underground water-courses. The interior is, however, drying up, and city, village, and cultivated field are being gradually overwhelmed in dust and shifting sands.

Possibly as late as early historical times very

different conditions prevailed. The lower plains and depressions once formed a series of lakes that suggested the appearance of an inland sea, and such names as island, port, lighthouse, &c., are said to still survive in places as a relic and indication of the old state of things,<sup>1</sup> while a considerable body of water is still to be found in the eastern half of the central depression on the frontier between Persia and Afghanistan. This region is now known as Sistán, but in ancient times was called Drangiana or the lake-country, a name which survived much later in its former capital Zarang, and as "Zirih" is still used in connection with its lake.

From April till late in the autumn the sky, save for an occasional thunderstorm among the mountains, is an unclouded azure, in winter a good deal of snow falls, and in spring the thunderstorms are heavy and frequent. The air is, as a rule, remarkably healthy, but on the borders of the deserts the inhabitants have sometimes to live shut up for weeks together to avoid the pestilential blasts.<sup>2</sup>

The favoured regions are those that front west and north respectively. They are splendidly wooded and extremely fertile, all the ordinary flowers and fruits of Europe do well, while in the district between the Alburz Mountains and the Caspian, and known as Mázandarán, the climate is semitropical and the vegetation most luxuriant. Here rice, the sugar-cane, the vine, the orange, and the olive flourish.<sup>3</sup> In the few watered valleys of the long southern coast the climate is tropical in character. The tamarisk and mimosa are largely represented, and here and there are groves of date-palms.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, near Kasbin, on the road between Tihván and Hamadán, and at Barchin, a village near Maibud to the north of Yazd. GHP, i. 13; KA, ii. 473.

<sup>2</sup> MHP, ii. 367.

<sup>3</sup> DHA, v. 9.



The immediate neighbourhood of the salt-deserts is the haunt of the wild ass or onager and of the antelope, the slope of the mountain-ranges of the wild sheep or argali, and their summit of the wild goat or ibex. The tracts artificially reclaimed and watered are the favourite home of the sandgrouse, and the highlands of the eagle, the vulture, the falcon, the raven, the crow, and the nightingale—the bulbul of the poets. The acorns of the western slopes attract the wild swine, which in turn tempt the lion from the reed-beds of the Tigris and the cover of its tributaries.<sup>1</sup> Swine, too, abound in Mázarán and afford food for the tiger which flourishes there, the dense undergrowth and vegetation of that region affording it as good shelter as an Indian jungle.<sup>2</sup> Here, too, are found deer, buffalo, swan, waterfowl, woodcock, and pheasant. Speaking of the country more generally we may add to this list leopards, wildcats, wolves, bears, hyenas, foxes, snakes, scorpions, vipers, lizards, the partridge, and the lark. The chief domestic animals are the ox, the sheep, especially the fat-tailed variety, the horse, the camel, and the mule.

Írán is a land of sharp contrasts, of intense heat and cold, of sudden and abnormal changes of temperature, of dead level and steep ascent, of splendid fertility hard by lifeless desolation, of irrigation and dust. Its natural characteristics find expression in the ancient cosmogony of its people. We are told that Urmuzd—the Good Principle—created earth as a lovely plain bathed in a mild perpetual radiance, fanned by soft temperate airs, bounteously provided with fresh sweet waters, and clad in a smooth and harmless vegetation. Here the First Man and the First Ox dwelt in peace and happiness. Áhriman—the Evil Principle—broke into this fair scene and all was changed. Gloom mingled with light, the seasons' difference began, the

<sup>1</sup> EP, ii. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* 34.

seas turned salt, the streams dwindled, the vegetation grew rough and thorny, drought came and dust and desert; mountain-ranges sprang up from the plain, and the man and ox were stricken with disease and died; but from the body of the former sprang the first human pair from whom all the earth was overspread, and from the body of the latter all other harmless, useful, and beautiful animals, while Áhriman in opposition to these created all noisome and hideous insects, reptiles, and creatures sharp of fang or claw.

Let us now turn from the land to the people. For us there is no occasion to discuss questions of race from any very modern standpoint. For us it is rather what ethnical views obtained in ancient Írán and moulded its traditions. As to these there is happily little room for doubt, Darius Hystaspis, the founder of the Persian empire and the greatest of its historic Sháhs, having decided the matter for us. On the rock of Bîhistún he recorded his great achievements in a trilingual inscription, the languages employed being ancient Persian, Babylonian, and Scythian. The obvious explanation of his proceeding is, that he recognised in the population of his vast empire three distinct races of mankind, and, regarding language as distinctive of race, used it to emphasise that great political fact. In thus distinguishing he followed a true philological instinct, and his distinctions still largely obtain at the present day. Each of his three languages represents a great division of human speech. His view, as we shall see, agrees with the traditions and legends of his race, and if some modern Sháh were to restore the empire of Darius, and wished to imitate the example of his great predecessor, he would still have to choose languages typical of the same three divisions. In what follows, therefore, language is made the basis of classification, and the divisions thus classified are commonly called the Indo-European, the Semitic, and

the Túránian respectively. It is with peoples of the first division that we are chiefly concerned, and only so far as these came into contact with peoples of the other two divisions are we concerned about the latter.

At the dawn of history we find peoples speaking languages which, theoretically at all events, may be traced back to one primitive tongue, holding similar religious notions and organised politically as independent self-governing tribes, in possession of large geographical areas both in Europe and Asia. They thus fall into two great divisions—an European and an Asiatic—and are generally known as the Indo-European race. The Asiatic branch seems to have occupied in early times the neighbourhoods of Balkh, Harát, Marv, and possibly of Samarkand. It described itself as Aryan or noble, as opposed to all those with whom it came into contact, much as the Greeks divided mankind into Hellenes and Barbaroi. It was organised into three orders or castes—priests, warriors, and husbandmen. Its religion was a frank worship of personified natural forces. Its priests were fire-priests, and fire was an especial object of adoration along with the other beneficent powers of nature—Mitra or Mithra, Yama or Yima, Tritá, Traitána, and others. Opposed to these were the malignant spirits of drought and darkness, as, for instance, Azi or Azhi, also known as Daháka—the biter, the serpent-fiend. Water was ever growing scarcer, and drought or plenty turned in the imagination of a primitive people on the struggle of the good and evil spirits for its possession. The former appeared in the lightning-flash, while the gloomy convolutions of the thunder-cloud suggested the idea that fiends in serpent-form were striving to carry off the precious fluid—the heavenly waters as distinguished from the earthly waters—and hinder it from descending to the help of man. The cloud—the rain-bringer—

was perversely regarded as the rain-stealer. The good spirits hastened to the rescue, the lightning-flash clove the cloud, and the demons dropped their booty. The serpent-fiend had to be combated for other reasons too, for his bite brought fever, disease, and death. Accordingly the divine physician appeared side by side with the divine hero, Tritá with Traitána, and became, as we shall see later on, merged, into a single personality in Íránian legend. Sacrifices were offered, and the drink-offering of the juice of the Soma or Homa plant was poured forth. The plant is usually identified as being the *Asclepias acida* or *Sarcostemma viminale*.<sup>1</sup> The Aryans also worshipped the spirits of their ancestors, and were believers in what is called sympathetic magic. They thought that injury done to anything in the remotest way connected with their own persons would affect themselves injuriously. Even the knowledge of their name might be turned to their hurt, and we shall find instances in the poem of children being brought up unnamed to avoid that contingency.

At a period which cannot be put at less than four thousand years ago the Aryans themselves divided, and while a portion descended to the Indus and became the dominant race in India, the rest remained and gradually took possession of all that was habitable in the vast region that consequently became known as the land of the Aryans or Írán. The Aryans thus became separated into two branches—an Eastern and a Western. With the former we are but little concerned (the legendary story of the latter is the theme of the Sháhnameh.)

Of these Western Aryans the two most famous peoples have ever been the Medes and Persians.

<sup>1</sup> The plant grows in the regions about Samarkand and Balkh in the north and in Kirmán in the south. The shoots were pounded in a mortar, and water being added a greenish liquid was produced, which having been strained was mixed with milk and barley or wild rice and allowed to ferment. The product was intoxicating. See GHP, i. 36; DHA, iv. 53.

The Medes, whose modern representatives, if any, seem to be the Kúrd, appear in ancient times to have been a loose confederation of kindred tribes broken up into numerous settlements, each under its local headman or chief.<sup>1</sup> They seem to have had no supreme political head or king to unite the race under one central authority. Their common bond, if any, was a religious one under their priests, the Magi. According to their own traditions the original seat of the race was Írán-vej, *i.e.*, "Íránian seed," and this has been well identified with the district of Karabagh, the ancient Arrán, the *Ἀριανία* of the Greeks, between the Kúr and the Aras, where the Anti-Caucasus forms the true north-western scarp of the tableland of Írán.<sup>2</sup> In historical times, however, we first find the Medes in possession of the province of Ázarbíján, or, to give it its ancient title, Atropatene. The Persians occupied from time immemorial the country on the eastern shores of the Persian Gulf, now represented by the modern provinces of Farsistán and Laristán, and were ruled by kings of the house of Achaemenes. These two peoples, closely connected as they were by language and race, became in the days of Darius Hystaspis dominant in Írán, and to this domination the Medes appear to have contributed the religious, the Persians the political, element. Between the Medes and the Persians lay in ancient times, as we learn from Assyrian and Babylonian records, other kindred peoples—the kingdom of Elam, with its capital at Susa, some twenty-five miles west of the modern Shuster, and the kingdom of Ellipi, in the neighbourhood of the modern Hamadán. The Íránians as a whole were bounded on the west by Semitic and on the north by Túránian peoples. On the east they were conterminous with the Aryans of India, and ultimately they came into contact with the Western

<sup>1</sup> The "kings of the Medes" of Jer. xxv. 25.

<sup>2</sup> DZA, i. 3 and notes; KA, i. 45.

Indo-Europeans as well, notably with the Greeks and Romans. As the cosmogony and religion of the Íránians were largely derived from their physical, so was their tradition from their ethnical, environment. We are concerned with all three, but especially with the last—their tradition.) The remainder of the present chapter will therefore be devoted to a brief, and necessarily dry, summary of their historical relations with the Semites as represented by the Assyrians in early and the Arabs in later times, with other Indo-European races represented by the Greeks and Romans in the west and by the Hindus in the east, and with the Túránians as represented by the Kimmerians, Scythians, Parthians, Huns and Turks.

*The Íránians and the Semites.*—In the numerous contemporary records of the Assyrians we find many references to the Íránians. The whole of the western frontier of Írán, from the Medes in the north to the Persians in the south, seems to have been subjected at one point or another to almost constant aggression, at first by mere raids but later on by attempts at permanent conquest, at the hands of the great warrior-monarchs of Nineveh—Shalmaneser II. (B.C. 858–823),<sup>1</sup> Samas Rimmon II. (B.C. 823–810),<sup>2</sup> Rimmon-nirari III. (B.C. 810–783),<sup>3</sup> Tiglath Pileser III. (B.C. 745–727),<sup>4</sup> Sargon (B.C. 722–705),<sup>5</sup> Sennacherib (B.C. 705–681),<sup>6</sup> Esarhaddon I. (B.C. 681–668),<sup>7</sup> and Assurbanipal (B.C. 668–626).<sup>8</sup> The attempts at permanent conquest date from the reign of Sargon. The long reign of Assurbanipal falls into two periods, a former of great extension and conquest, and a latter when the tide began to turn and the Assyrian empire, overstrained and exhausted, showed signs of decay. Finally, in the reign of Esarhaddon II., Nineveh fell (B.C. 606), over-

<sup>1</sup> RPNS, iv. 38–51.

<sup>2</sup> R, i. 11–22.

<sup>3</sup> DHA, ii. 326.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* iii. 3–5.

<sup>5</sup> RP, ix. 3–20.

<sup>6</sup> RPNS, vi. 83–101.

<sup>7</sup> RP, iii. 103–124.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*, ix. 39–64.

whelmed by a confederacy which included the Medes. Probably no empire was ever less lamented by the world at large, for we have the Assyrians' own word for it that their warfare was attended with every circumstance of cruelty and horror. They hold indeed a bad pre-eminence in that respect over all the other nations of antiquity.

With the fall of Nineveh serious Semitic aggression ceased, so far as the Íránians were concerned, till after the Christian era had begun. Arabia was at that epoch extremely prosperous, and carried on a vast caravan traffic in native produce and imports from India with the west and north. When, however, Rome had become recognised as the centre of the world, her merchants soon hit upon a less circuitous and consequently cheaper route. They started a direct traffic between India and the Red Sea, whereby merchandise, instead of being landed in Southern Arabia and thence conveyed northwards by land, was discharged at Arsinoe, Cleopatris (Suez), and other Egyptian ports. As a result, Southern Arabia—the most fertile and populous region of the peninsula—was ruined, and in time, both there and along the lines of the old caravan-routes, only massive remains of cities, canals, dams, and aqueducts were left to witness to a lost prosperity. A vast population was thrown out of employment, and the Arabs began to emigrate northward as early, it would seem, as the first century A.D. The Azdites in this way founded the cities of Hira and Anbar on the Euphrates, and were lords of Damascus till the days of the Khalífa 'Umar. Other tribes from the south settled in the mountains of Ajá and Salmá, to the north of Najd and Al Hajáz. These Northern Arabs were divided in their allegiance between the Roman and Sásánian empires; and their quarrels among themselves, their restlessness and inconstancy, made them thorns in the sides of both, and led to many

difficulties. The defeat of Julian by Sapor II. is said to have been largely due to the defection of the Arab allies of the former, while on the other hand the western frontier of Írán was always liable to be overrun by them as far north as and including Ázarbáján. The havoc caused was often great, and the retaliation, on occasions, ferocious.

With the rise of Muhammad the Arabs became a great religious and political power. After his death in A.D. 632 he was succeeded in turn by Abú Bakr and 'Umar. In the course of the ten years of the latter's rule Írán was conquered by his generals after the three great battles of Kádisiyya and Jalúlá in A.D. 637, and Nahávand, A.D. 641. A dynasty of high officials of the Sásánian empire still held out and maintained the ancient faith in the fastnesses of Mázandarán,<sup>1</sup> but Írán as a whole was both from a religious and a political point of view submerged. The religious conquest proved to be permanent, but after a time national feeling began to re-assert itself against the political, as the following brief summary of events may serve to show. 'Umar appointed a committee of five to select the next Khalífa after his death. After long debate they chose 'Uthmán, but subsequently repenting of their choice three of the five brought about his assassination after a reign of twelve years, and nominated 'Alí as Khalífa (A.D. 656). 'Uthmán was of the Umayyad family, and its head Mu'áwiya, then governor of Syria, took up arms to avenge him. Neither had any direct claim to the Khiláfat, but 'Alí was the son of Muhammad's uncle Abú Tálíb, and had married the prophet's daughter Fátíma, known as "the maiden." Muhammad had said of him: "'Alí is for me, and I am for him; he stands to me in the same rank as Aaron did to Moses; I am the town in which all knowledge is shut up, and he is the gate

<sup>1</sup> NSEH, 139.



of it.”<sup>1</sup> ‘Alí came to be regarded as associated in a very special way with the prophet, and was known as his executor or mandatary, and also as the Lion of God, or simply as the Lion. Mu’áwiya, on the other hand, was the son of one of Muhammad’s bitterest opponents, and had nothing but his own abilities to recommend him. In the heat of the contest which ensued some of ‘Alí’s followers in their zeal for him went too far. They not only claimed the Khiláfat for him by divine right, but actually denied that Abú Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmán had any title to be regarded as legitimate Khalifas at all. This shocked and drew a good many of the faithful into Mu’áwiya’s camp, and the two parties became known as Shí’ites (partisans) and Sunnites (orthodox). In the event an extreme Muhammadan sect known as Kharijites (dissenters), which arose at that time, denied the rights of both candidates, advocated the bestowal of the Khiláfat on “the best,” and came to the conclusion that the true course out of the difficulty would be to remove both. ‘Alí was accordingly assassinated, but Mu’áwiya escaped and became Khalifa without further dispute.<sup>2</sup> The wrongs of ‘Alí, however, as many thought them, had taken hold on the popular mind, especially in Írán, and were intensified when his son Husain—the grandson of Muhammad himself—was slain by Mu’áwiya’s son and successor Yizid, A.D. 681. The Umayyads, whose chief support lay in Syria, had necessarily to rule from Damascus, and this tended to slacken their hold over their Eastern possessions. Taking advantage of this fact, and exploiting the feeling about ‘Alí to their own advantage, the descendants of ‘Abbás, one of Muhammad’s uncles, gradually undermined the position of the reigning house, till at length in the year A.D. 750, with the assistance of the Persians, they supplanted the Umayyads everywhere except in Spain. The

<sup>1</sup> OHS, 331.<sup>2</sup> NESH, 80.

triumph of the 'Abbásids was a half triumph for Persian nationality, and the fact was recognised by the abandonment of Damascus as the seat of empire, and a return to the old state of things that had prevailed under the Sásánians by the building of Baghdád and the transference to it of the seat of government. Another triumph was won when, after the death of Hárúnú'r-Rashíd, his son Mámún, whose mother was a Persian slave, overcame with Persian help his brother Amín, who was supported by Syria. Mámún was the last great 'Abbásid Khalífa (A.D. 813-833). Decline soon followed. In A.D. 861 the Khalífa Mutawakkil was murdered by his own son, and the 'Abbásids became thenceforth insignificant, having little power outside the walls of Baghdád and dependent chiefly on the forbearance of their mayors of the palace, if the expression may be applied to Eastern history, who preferred to veil their own supremacy behind the reverence still inspired by the Khalífas in their religious aspect as Commanders of the Faithful. In the tenth century this office was held by the Dflamids, who claimed descent from the ancient Persian kings and were fervent Shíites. They ruled over Western and Southern Írán, posing the while as the Khalífas' most obedient slaves. In the north and east the Sámánides, who claimed to be descended from the famous Íránian hero Bahrám Chubína, but were in reality of Turkman descent, were supreme. The political supremacy of the Arabs in Írán was at an end.

*The Íránians and the Greeks and Romans.*—The historic strife between Persian and Greek is so familiar to us that it is hard to realise that the only portion of it in Íránian legend that in any way coincides with authentic history is that which deals with the invasion of the East by Alexander the Great; and even this is mostly based not on native but Greek tradition, so modified by Íránian patriotism as to gloss over or explain

away the great overthrow of the East by the West. A genuine native tradition dating from those times would be extremely interesting, and it is very disappointing not to have it. Nothing survives of Alexander the Great in native Íránian legend except a conviction that he was one of the great persecutors and destroyers of Zoroastrianism. This will be referred to later on, when we have to touch upon the preservation of Íránian tradition in general. It would seem as if the long predominance of the Roman empire on the stage of history had obliterated the memory of most of the great events of earlier ages and distorted that of the rest. We should expect, however, that at least the Roman empire itself during its greatest period would receive some recognition, especially an event so glorious for the East as the overthrow of Crassus at Carrhae (B.C. 53), but again we are disappointed. The explanation seems to be that during the whole period of the rise and greatness of Rome, Írán was under foreign domination, first Grecian and then Parthian. At all events it is not till a native dynasty rules again in Írán that we begin to find common ground in Íránian and Roman history, and this is not till the third century of the Christian era. Till then Rome obliterated Greece only to be ignored itself in all but the name. Íránian tradition knows of Rûm but of nothing behind it.

*The Íránians and the Aryans of India.*—In this case the interest for us is chiefly a religious one. From the date (B.C. 250) of the conversion of the Indian king, Asoka of Magadha, to Buddhism that faith began to extend rapidly. Asoka, like all sincere converts, was an enthusiast, and in his reign Buddhism was preached not only in India itself but in Eastern Írán, and even so far west, it is said, as the shores of the Caspian.<sup>1</sup> It prospered much and continued to hold its own in Kábulistán till A.D. 850,

<sup>1</sup> DHA, iv, 543; Gray, "At the Court of the Amir," 143; HIE, 149.

when a Brahman dynasty replaced the Buddhist. It was probably not much before the eleventh century of the Christian era that Muhammadanism finally triumphed in those regions.<sup>1</sup> To the Zoroastrian, however, no less than to the Muhammadan, Buddhism and Brahmanism were alike idolatry, and this view has left, as we shall see, its mark on Íránian legend. The fierce wars carried on against the idolaters of India by the Muhammadans of Eastern Írán at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century have also left their mark.

*The Íránians and Túránians.*—Savage, barbarous, and uncouth, the nations of the North have always been notorious for the disgust and terror with which they have inspired the higher civilisations of the South. The Túránians were little better than the Assyrians in their treatment of vanquished foes, and decidedly worse in aspect. In the most ancient times of which we have any record, the great highway for these nations southward lay between the Caspian and Euxine Seas. They had therefore to cross the barrier of the Caucasus, which is said to be only passable, save by expert Alpine climbers, in three places, one at each end and one near the centre. Of these the most practicable for large bodies of men lay along the flat shores of the Caspian. The Caucasus stops short of that sea, and only one spur of the range running in a north-easterly direction nearly approaches it. Between this spur and the sea, where the passage is narrowest, stands the town of Darband. Here, according to the legend, Sikandar, *i.e.* Alexander the Great, built a mighty barrier to restrain the incursions of Gog and Magog, *i.e.* of the Túránians. Such a wall extending across the Pass of Darband was actually built for that purpose by the great Sásánian Sháh Núshírwán, the contemporary of the Emperor Justinian, and those two rulers agreed to share the

<sup>1</sup> EHI, ii. 415, &c.

expense of preventing barbarism from penetrating south of the Caucasus.<sup>1</sup> Two centuries later, when the Khazars, a Turkish race from what is now Southern Russia, captured Tiflis and wrought great havoc, the 'Abbásid Khalífa Mansúr erected defensive works and secured the whole region up to the great mountain-barrier.<sup>2</sup> Coming down to later times, and regarding the matter from the other side, we may mention that one of Peter the Great's first acts after his accession to the throne was to make sure of Darband.

The first historical invasion by a Túránian race is that of the Kimmerians of Homer and Herodotus, the Gomer of the Bible and the Gimirrá of the Assyrian inscriptions, who appear to have dwelt in early times on the Dniester and the Sea of Azof, whence they were driven by the pressure of kindred races whom the Assyrians called Manda. Traversing the Pass of Darband they settled for a time north of the Aras, where undoubtedly they must have come into contact with the Medes. Being still pressed upon from the north, they made an unsuccessful attempt to invade Assyria in B.C. 677, and then turned westward into Asia Minor.<sup>3</sup>

In the wake of the Kimmerian invasion came the cause of it—the Sacae or Scythians, who seem to have forced the line of the Aras, to have overrun the territory of the Medes and the kingdom of Ellipi, and to have established as their capital the famous city of Ekbatana, the modern Hamadán, in what has always been known in ancient history as Media Magna. It seems to have been this domination of the Sacae at Ekbatana that has been recorded for us in history as the Empire of the Medes. The confusion appears to

<sup>1</sup> GDF, v. 87-89. In RSM, 352, this arrangement is said to have begun in the reigns of Yazdagird II. and the younger Theodosius. The reader will find a picture of Darband (Derbent) and its wall in KA, i. 76.

<sup>2</sup> NSEH, 138.

<sup>3</sup> SHC, 124.

have arisen from the similarity between the Assyrian words for Medes and nomads respectively, the former being Madá and the latter Manda, coupled with the fact that the Madá and Manda both formed part of the confederation which, under the leadership of Kastarit, the Kyaxares of the Greeks, overthrew Nineveh.<sup>1</sup> The empire of the Manda at Ekbatana—the so-called Median Empire—continued till the middle of the sixth century B.C. It shared the dominion over Western Asia with Babylon and Lydia, and was no doubt the cause of the elaborate defensive works with which Nebuchadnezzar, mindful of the fate of Nineveh, sought to make his capital impregnable: it held the overlordship of Western Írán. In the year B.C. 550, however, Cyrus, king of Elam, rebelled against his overlord, Istuvegu of Ekbatana, the Astyages of the Greeks, and overthrew him in the following year.<sup>2</sup> Cyrus then subjugated the Persians, entered Babylon in B.C. 544, conquered Asia Minor and all the tableland of Írán, united its tribes for the first time in history under one government, and became known to later times as Cyrus the Great. He is said to have extended his conquests to the Jaxartes, on the borders of which he erected fortresses to hold the nomad tribes in check,<sup>3</sup> and the Greek historians, with the exception of Xenophon, represent him as perishing in a war with the Scythians. The legend of Cyrus and Tomyris, the queen of the Massagetae, told by Herodotus, is well known.<sup>4</sup> Cyrus' second successor, Darius Hystaspis, the false Smerdis being left out of the question, also carried the war into the enemy's country, and advanced beyond the Danube in B.C. 513, though not very successfully, to avenge, as Herodotus tells us,<sup>5</sup> the Scythian invasions which preceded the fall of the Assyrian Empire.

In the century after the death of Alexander the

<sup>1</sup> SHC, 484, 520.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* 499.

<sup>3</sup> DHA, v. 22; vi. 103.

<sup>4</sup> Herod. i. 205.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* iv. 1.

Great the Parthians, reinforced by another Túránian tribe known as the Dahae, rebelled against the Seleucids (B.C. 250), and became the dominant race in Írán, till a successful revolt (A.D. 226) placed the native Sásánian dynasty on the throne. During their long domination the Parthians in their turn suffered from the incursions of kindred races from the North, in much the same way as the English settlers in Britain suffered from the Danes. The second century before the Christian era was marked by great activity on the part of the Túránians, and the whole border of Írán from the Hindu Kush to the Caspian was overrun by them. Two Parthian monarchs in succession—Phraates II. and Artabanus II.—were defeated and slain, and the Parthian Empire was only saved from overthrow by Mithridates II. Foiled by him the Túránians turned to the East and permanently settled in Eastern Írán, in the region which has ever since been called after one of their peoples, Sacæstan or Sístán, the stead or home of the Sacæ (c. B.C. 100).

Another Túránian people, known as the Aláns or Aláni, who first appear, it is said,<sup>1</sup> in Chinese annals, were on the Volga in the first century of the Christian era. Pressed upon by the Huns, who had defeated them in a great battle, they overran Media and Armenia, some of them finding their way into the Caucasus, where their descendants, it is said, still exist.<sup>2</sup> Thence in A.D. 133, at the invitation of Pharasmanes, king of Iberia, they invaded Ázarbíján and Armenia, ravaged the country, and had to be bought off by Vologeses II., the Parthian monarch of the time.

The Huns, who had been instrumental in precipitating the Aláni on Írán, were themselves in flight before other hordes. A large contingent of them seized and settled upon the oasis of Samarkand or Sughd. Here, improved by long settlement both in aspect and manners,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> GDF, iii. 315-316, and note.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* iii, 312.

they became known as the White Huns; or to the Íránians, who carried on many wars with them, as the Haitálians.

Lastly, in the middle of the sixth century of the Christian era the name of the Turks begins to appear in history. Spreading from Mount Altai, or the Golden Mountain, in Central Asia, they extended themselves over the northern half of the continent, subjugating among other nations the Haitálians. The empire of the Turks only lasted about two centuries,<sup>1</sup> but the tribes and nations of which it was composed were spread over the north of Asia from China to the Oxus and the Danube, and under the name of Turkmen have proved a permanent menace to the northern frontiers of Írán.

The 'Abbásids soon learned to avail themselves of the services of Turkmen chiefs in the administration of their empire. It was thus that the Sámánids first rose to power under the Khalífa Mámún, only, as we have seen, to make themselves independent under his degenerate successors. About the year A.D. 961 a disputed succession occurred among the Sámánids. The rightful heir in the direct line was a boy only eight years old, and for that reason, as the times were troublous, a party among the nobles declared in favour of his uncle, his father's brother. The matter was referred for settlement to the Sámánid governor of Khurásán—a man of Turkmen descent named Alptigin—but before his decision arrived the dispute had been settled and Mansúr had succeeded to the throne. Alptigin had given his decision in favour of the uncle, and being fearful of Mansúr's vengeance he withdrew from Khurásán and carved himself out a small principality at Ghazní. He died in A.D. 969, and after two short reigns the troops elected Subúktigin to be their chief. He was a Turkmen, had been brought up

<sup>1</sup> GDF, v. 175



in the household of Alptigin, had subsequently acted as his general, and was a man of great ability and courage. He speedily enlarged his dominions and began those raids into India which became so frequent in the days of his more famous son. In the meantime the Sámánid ruler Mansúr had died, and his son, the Amír Nuh II., was driven from his capital at Bukhárá by a Turkman invasion instigated by two of his own nobles, who subsequently, however, were compelled to flee for their lives. They appealed for aid to the Dílámids—the rivals of the Sámánids—and obtained it. On this the Amír Nuh II. himself appealed for help to Subuktigin, who marched to his assistance. A great battle was fought at Harát, and Subuktigin gained a decisive victory. The Amír in his gratitude bestowed on him the title of Násiru'd-Dín, or Defender of the Faith, and on his eldest son Mahmúd, who had greatly distinguished himself, that of Saifu'd-Daula, or Sword of the State, as well as the governorship of Khurásán. This happened in A.D. 994. Three years later Subuktigin died. He left three sons, Mahmúd, Ismá'íl, and Nasr, and appointed Ismá'íl to succeed him. Mahmúd seems to have behaved well, but after vain attempts at conciliation and compromise he was compelled to assert himself against his brother, who was speedily overthrown and ended his days in internment as a state-prisoner. The other brother, Nasr, supported Mahmúd. Shortly afterwards the Sámánid dynasty flickered out after the death of the Amír Nuh II., and in A.D. 999 Mahmúd formally assumed the sovereignty, an event which is duly noted on his coins by the prefix of Amír to his own titles, and the omission of the name of the Sámánid overlord which previously had been retained by the rulers of Ghazní.<sup>1</sup> Mahmúd was then twenty-eight years old. His career as a great conqueror and

<sup>1</sup> EHI, ii. 479.

religious fanatic is well known. His domination extended from the Punjáb to the Tigris, and from Bukhárá to the Indian Ocean. He has, however, another claim upon our memories. His name was to become for ever associated with that of the poet of the *Sháhnáma* who had despaired in those troublous times of obtaining any adequate royal patronage for his long formed design of moulding into song the epic history of his land and people. It was a moment of high hopes for many, for the young and ambitious prince, for the ambitious but no longer youthful poet, and for all who either by birth or adoption had the welfare of Írán at heart. The Arab yoke had been shaken off, Persian was reviving in the literature, old Íránian names were being resumed, and there seemed the fairest prospects for the establishment of a third Persian empire with Mahmúd for its first Sháh. It is true that religious differences remained. Half Írán was Shí'ite and the other half Sunnite,<sup>1</sup> but save for that it seemed a stroke of fair fortune that made the great king and the great poet contemporaries.

<sup>1</sup> The Turkman element was strongly Sunnite. Persia did not become thoroughly Shí'ite till the sixteenth century. NSEH, 101.

## CHAPTER II

### POET AND POEM .

THE most trustworthy materials for the life of Firdausí are to be found in his own personal references, there being probably no poem of considerable length in which the writer keeps himself so much in evidence as Firdausí does in the *Sháhnáma*. Next in authority to his own statements we must place the account given of him by Nizámí-i-'Arúdí of Samarkand in his work entitled "*Chahár Makála*," *i.e.* "Four Discourses."<sup>1</sup> They are on Secretaries, Poets, Astrologers, and Physicians respectively, and consist chiefly of anecdotes. One of these, in the "Discourse on Poets," gives the valuable account of Firdausí. Unfortunately it throws doubt on the authenticity of the extant version of one of his compositions—the Satire on Sultán Mahmúd, only a few lines of which, if Nizámí is to be believed, can be regarded as Firdausí's own. They suffice, however, to indicate one good reason for the poet's difference with Mahmúd and the general line that he took in his literary revenge, though that Sultán, it is pretty evident, never even heard that the poet had written the Satire at all! In addition to the above-mentioned sources of information there are two formal biographies of the poet. One, which dates about A.D. 1425, was compiled by order of Baisinghar Khán, the grandson of Tímúr the Lame, and is prefixed to the former's edition of the text of the *Sháhnáma*. It is apparently based on an older metrical life of which

<sup>1</sup> BCM.

it preserves some extracts, and is itself the basis of most of the biographical notices of the poet, including that in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The other, which dates about A.D. 1486, is in Daulat Sháh's "Lives of the Poets," and is preferred by the writer of the article "Ferdoucy" in the *Biographie Universelle*. Both are used by Mohl in the preface to his edition of the text and translation of the Sháhnáma, and both are full of mythical details.

Let us first confine ourselves to the statements in the poet's undoubted writings and to legitimate deductions therefrom. He calls himself Abú 'l Kásim, and we gather that he was born about A.D. 941. We arrive at this in the following way. In the whole Sháhnáma there is only one definite date—that on which he finished the poem. This, mixing up the Muhammadan era with the Zoroastrian calendar, he tells us he did on the day of Ard in the month of Sapandármad of the year 400 of the Hijra. This particular year, for the Muhammadan years are lunar and vary accordingly, began on August 25th, A.D. 1009, and ended on the 14th day of that month in the year following. Therefore Firdausí finished the Sháhnáma on February 25th, A.D. 1010. He gives his one date in the concluding lines of the poem, where he also says :—

When one and seventy years had passed me by  
The heavens bowed down before my poetry.<sup>1</sup>

This we may fairly interpret as meaning that he finished his work when he was seventy-one years old, *i.e.* about sixty-nine, as we reckon, since thirty-four Muhammadan years go to about thirty-three of ours.

The poet was a Muhammadan of the Shí'ite sect. This is clear from his reference to 'Alí in his Prelude.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C, 2095.

<sup>2</sup> In this volume § 7.

Moreover, he was not a strict Muhammadan in the matter of wine-drinking :—

The time to quaff delicious wine is now,  
For musky scents breathe from the mountain-brow,  
The air resoundeth and earth travaileth,  
And blest is he whose heart drink gladdeneth,  
He that hath wine and money, bread and sweets,  
And can behead a sheep to make him meats.  
These have not I. Who hath them well is he.  
Oh ! pity one that is in poverty !<sup>1</sup>

And again :—

Bring tulip-tinted wine, O Hāshimī !  
From jars that never need replenishing.  
Why seek I who am deaf at sixty-three  
The world's grace and observance ?<sup>2</sup>

He soon after has a fit of repentance :—

Old man whose years amount to sixty-three !  
Shall wine be still the burden of thy lay ?  
Without a warning life may end with thee ;  
Think of repentance then, seek wisdom's way.  
May God approve this slave. May he attain  
In wisdom riches and in singing gain.<sup>3</sup>

He owned or occupied land ; at least the following passages suggest that conclusion :—

A cloud hath risen and the moon's obscured,  
From that dark cloud a shower of milk is poured,  
No river plain or upland can I spy,  
The raven's plumes are lost against the sky,  
In one unceasing stream egg-apples fall :  
What is high heaven's purpose in it all ?  
No fire-wood salted meat or barley-grain  
Are left me, naught till harvest come again !  
Amid this gloom, this day of tax and fear,  
When earth with snow is like an ivory sphere,  
All mine affairs in overthrow will end  
Unless my hand is grasped by some good friend.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> V, 1630.

<sup>2</sup> C, 1457.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* 1460.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*, 1487. Reading last line with P.

And again:—

The hail this year like death on me hath come  
 Though death itself were better than the hail,  
 And heaven's lofty far extending dome  
 Hath caused my fuel sheep and wheat to fail.<sup>1</sup>

In some verses, complaining of the advance of old age, he alludes to a calamity that befell him when he was fifty-eight, or it may be that an escape from drowning, which he seems to have had about that time, had a sobering effect upon him. This accident will be referred to in another connection later on. He says:—

Since I took up the cup of fifty-eight  
 The bier and grave, naught else, I contemplate.  
 Ah ! for my sword-like speech when I was thirty,  
 Those luscious days, musk-scented, roseate !<sup>2</sup>

At the age of sixty-five he lost his son:—

At sixty-five 'tis ill to catch at pelf.  
 Oh ! let me read that lesson to myself  
 And muse upon the passing of my son.  
 My turn it was to go yet he hath gone.  
 . . . . .  
 Seven years and thirty o'er the youth had sped  
 When he distasted of the world and fled.  
 . . . . .  
 He hurried off alone. I stayed to see  
 The outcome of my labours.<sup>3</sup>

In the year following his son's death he speaks of himself as being much broken:—

While three score years and five were passing by,  
 Like Spring-winds o'er the desert, poverty  
 And toil were mine ; next year like one bemused  
 I leaned upon a staff, my hands refused .

<sup>1</sup> C, 2089.

<sup>2</sup> V, 680.

<sup>3</sup> C, 1951.

The rein, my cheeks grew moon-like pale, my beard  
 Lost its black hue and camphor-like appeared,  
 Mine upright stature bent as age came on  
 And all the lustre of mine eyes was gone.<sup>1</sup>

He never speaks of himself as having any profession or official position, but if we may hazard a conjecture it is that he or his son or both were educated for the office of scribe. He puts the following glorification of that profession into the mouth of Búzurjmihr, the famous chief minister of the still more famous Sháh Núshírwán :<sup>2</sup>—

Teach to thy son the business of the scribe  
 That he may be as life to thee and thine,  
 And, as thou wouldest have thy toils bear fruit,  
 Grudge not instructors to him, for this art  
 Will bring a youth before the throne and make  
 The undeserving fortune's favourite.  
 Of all professions 'tis the most esteemed,  
 Exalting even those of lowly birth.  
 A ready scribe who is a man of rede  
 Is bound to sit e'en in the royal presence  
 And, if he be a man of diligence,  
 Will have uncounted treasure from the Sháh,  
 While if endowed with fluency and style  
 He will be studious to improve himself,  
 Use his endeavours to be more concise  
 And put his matter more attractively.  
 The scribe hath need to be a man of wisdom,  
 Of much endurance and good memory,  
 A man of tact, accustomed to Court-ways,  
 A holy man whose tongue is mute for evil,  
 A man of knowledge, patience, truthfulness,  
 A man right trusty pious and well-favoured.  
 If thus endowed he cometh to the Sháh  
 He cannot choose but sit before the throne.<sup>3</sup>

However this may be, from the time when he became his own master he appears to have devoted him-

<sup>1</sup> V, 1274.

<sup>2</sup> The poet also represents this Sháh as being highly indignant when a wealthy cordwainer, in return for valuable services, ventures to ask as a favour that his son may be made a scribe. C, 1778.

<sup>3</sup> C, 1676.

self to poetry. Referring to the completion of the *Sháhnáma* he says:—

My life from youth to eld hath run its course  
In hearing other and mine own discourse.<sup>1</sup>

We have already had an allusion to his "sword-like speech" when he was thirty, and we know that between the ages of thirty-five and sixty-nine he was occupied on the *Sháhnáma*. He tells us in a passage that will be quoted later on that he spent thirty-five years on that poem, *i.e.* about thirty-four years as we reckon. The prose materials for this, he informs us, already had been embodied in book-form,<sup>2</sup> and the idea of turning them into verse had suggested itself to the poet *Dakíkí*, a young man of brilliant parts but of vicious habits, who was murdered by the hand of one of his own slaves.<sup>3</sup> *Dakíkí* had only just begun his great task when he was cut off, but *Firdausí* admits his priority:—

Although he only rhymed the veriest mite—  
One thousand couplets full of feast and fight—  
He was my pioneer and he alone  
In that he set the *Sháhs* upon the throne.  
From nobles honour and emolument  
Had he ; his trouble was his own ill bent.  
To sing the praises of the kings was his  
And crown the princes with his eulogies.<sup>4</sup>

*Dakíkí* seems to have died about A.D. 976, for *Firdausí* took up the work and it employed him for the next thirty-four years as we reckon. At first he found himself hampered through lack of the necessary materials. What those were will be explained later on in the present chapter. He made countless inquiries and began to despair, fearing that like *Dakíkí* he should not live to complete his undertaking. He

<sup>1</sup> C, 2096.

<sup>2</sup> See Prelude, § 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* § 9.

<sup>4</sup> V, 1555.



also suffered from lack of patronage and encouragement. The times were troublous and men's minds were otherwise occupied. At length both the needful materials and the patron were vouchsafed him. The former were obtained for him by a friend and fellow-townsmen.<sup>1</sup> The latter he found somewhat later in the person of Abú Mansúr bin Muhammad, probably a local magnate, who warmly encouraged him and treated him with the greatest kindness and generosity. This, we may venture to assume, was one of the happiest epochs in the poet's life. He was in the first flush of a great and enduring enthusiasm; the means of gratifying it were in his possession; he held the field, and his material future seemed assured: his noble, rich, and generous patron would see to that. Alas! that patron died—murdered like Dakíkí, but by whom and in what circumstances we know not. The poet was overwhelmed for a time, but he persevered and kept in mind his patron's counsel that the Book of Kings (Sháhnáma) when completed should be dedicated to kings.<sup>2</sup> In course of time the poet found other patrons, notably one Ahmad ibn Muhammad of Chálandshán, to whom in A.D. 999 he dedicated a complete Sháhnáma. Firdausí was staying with Ahmad when he had the escape from drowning already referred to, and he seems to have been rescued either by Ahmad himself or by Ahmad's son. This passage is not in our printed texts.<sup>3</sup> The poet, however, had never forgotten the advice of his former patron, the beloved Abú Mansúr, and in this same year his opportunity came. The last king of the Sámánid dynasty died and Mahmúd became supreme in Eastern Írán. Henceforth it was to Mahmúd that the poet looked for patronage, and he appears to have left

<sup>1</sup> Prelude, § 10.<sup>2</sup> *Id.* § 11.<sup>3</sup> NIN, 23, 24.

no stone unturned to gain it. If adulation could have achieved his end he ought to have succeeded. The reader will find a specimen in the present volume.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere in another elaborate panegyric he says:—

God bless the Sháh, the pride of crown and throne  
And signet-ring, bless him whose treasures groan  
With his munificence what while the fame  
Of majesty is heightened by his name.

. . . . .  
O'er all the world one carpet hath been placed—  
His token nevermore to be effaced—  
And on it are a cushion and a seat  
For Fazl, son of Ahmad, a man replete  
With justice, prudence, rede, and godly fear;  
No Sháh before had such a minister.  
In his hands is the peace of all the state  
For he is good and chief of all the great,  
Frank-spoken, with clean hands and single heart;  
To serve God and his sovereign is his part.  
With this wise upright minister for friend  
My far-extending labour reached its end.

I framed this story of the days of yore,  
Selected from the book of men of lore,  
That it in mine old age might yield me fruit,  
Give me a crown dínars and high repute,  
But saw no bounteous worldlord; there was none  
Who added to the lustre of the throne.  
I waited for a patron patiently—  
One whose munificence required no key.

. . . . .  
When I was fifty-eight, and when in truth  
I still felt young though I had lost my youth,  
A proclamation reached mine ears at last  
Whereat care aged and all my troubles pass'd.  
It ran :—"Ye men of name who long to find  
Some trace of Faridún still left behind!  
See bright-souled Faridún alive again  
With earth and time for bondslaves. He hath ta'en

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<sup>1</sup> Prelude, § 12.

The world by justice and by largessings,  
And is exalted o'er all other kings.  
Bright are the records of his earlier day,  
And may he flourish, root and fruit, for aye."  
Now since that proclamation reached mine ear  
I wish not any other sound to hear;  
In his name have I fashioned this my lay,  
And may his end be universal sway.<sup>1</sup>

The reader will note that both in § 12 of the Prelude and in the passage just quoted Firdausí couples Mahmúd and his minister in eulogy. As the Prelude is retrospective, we may venture to assume who that minister was, because as it was written last the reference if inopportune would not have been inserted. There can hardly be a doubt that in both passages the same minister is referred to—Fazl, son of Ahmad.

The passage from which the above extracts are taken is a very important one. It seems to have been penned a few years before the completion of the Sháhnáma, for the poet was over sixty-five at the time. The extracts suggest that he had lately received some definite encouragement, some promise of patronage or reward from Mahmúd or his minister or both, whereupon he wrote this panegyric and prefixed it to the section that he had been engaged on or had taken in hand when the announcement of Mahmúd's accession first reached him. If Mahmúd, who was of Turkman descent, had strong racial proclivities, the section in point hardly seems to be well chosen, for it tells of the final overthrow of Afrásiyáb, the great protagonist of the Turkman race, at the hands of the Íránian Sháh Kai Khusrau. Perhaps Mahmúd had become more Íránian than the Íránians. Such cases are not unknown in history. At all events we know that his minister Fazl, son of Ahmad, or to give him his full title Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl bin Ahmad, had Íránian

<sup>1</sup> V, 1272-1274.

leanings, for he changed the official language for state documents from Arabic to Persian. After his fall his successor, Ahmad Hasan Maimandí, returned to the old arrangement.<sup>1</sup> At the time when the poet wrote the above passage Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl must have been at the height of his power, say about A.D. 1006. We are told on the authority of Al 'Utbí that he was one of the most celebrated of book-students, and Al 'Utbí, who was Mahmúd's secretary, ought to have known.<sup>2</sup> It is very hard to resist the inference that Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl had given the poet encouragement, and that the latter looked to him to secure a fitting reception by Mahmúd of the poem when finished. The poet's idea seems to have been that the Sháhnáma was to be regarded as Mahmúd's memorial, while the profits of his great work were to be devoted to some special object which was to be regarded as his own memorial:—

Of all the things that earn our monarch's praise,  
 The things of chiefest profit in his days,  
 This will best serve to keep his memory rife  
 And live as part and parcel of his life,  
 And I am hoping to live too till I  
 Receive his gold that when I come to die  
 I too may leave my monument with things  
 Drawn from the treasury of the king of kings.<sup>3</sup>

If the poet put his faith in Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl he was doomed to disappointment. In the meantime we have a lamentation over hopes deferred, royal neglect which may have been intentional or merely unwitting, and active opposition:—

Six times ten thousand couplets there will be  
 Well ordered—banishers of misery.  
 For thrice a thousand couplets one may look  
 In vain as yet in any Persian book,  
 And if thou cancellest each faulty strain  
 In sooth five hundred scarcely will remain.

<sup>1</sup> NIN, 25, note.

<sup>2</sup> KUR, 396.

<sup>3</sup> V, 1730.

That one—a bounteous king and of such worth  
 And lustre mid the monarchs of the earth—  
 Should disregard these histories is due  
 To slanderers and mine ill fortune too.  
 They have maligned my work, my marketing  
 Is spoiled through lack of favour with the king,  
 But when the royal warrior shall read  
 My pleasant histories with all good heed  
 I shall be gladdened by his treasures here,  
 And may no foeman's ill approach him near.  
 My book may then recall me to his mind  
 And I the fruitage of my labours find.  
 Be his the crown and throne while time shall run,  
 And may his destiny outshine the sun.<sup>1</sup>

At another time he is plunged in despair :—

The dear delights of earth, the sovereign sway,  
 What boot they ? Soon thy rule will pass away.  
 Blest is the pious mendicant and wise,  
 Whose ears oft feel the world's rough pleasantries,  
 For when he passeth he will leave behind  
 A good name and a good conclusion find.  
 His portion is in Heaven and in God's sight  
 He will have honour. Such is not my plight  
 Who am in wretched case, calamitous,  
 With all that I possess sent Hellward thus  
 Beyond recall ! No hope in Heaven I see,  
 My hand is void, both worlds have ruined me !<sup>2</sup>

In moments of disappointment, too, and at periods probably years apart, the poet gives vent to his feelings not only in respect to his own times but even to Mahmúd himself. The expression of them is put into the mouths of some of his characters, but the prophecies are of the sound type made after the event and evidently the poet's own handiwork :—

A time is coming when the world will have  
 A king that is devoid of understanding,  
 A king whose gloomy spirit will work woe ;  
 The world will darken 'neath his tyranny

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<sup>1</sup> C, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* 1587.

And good will ne'er be found among his treasures.  
 He will be ever gathering fresh hosts  
 To win his crown new fame but in the end  
 This monarch and his hosts will pass away,  
 And there will be a change of dynasty.<sup>1</sup>

And again:—

The warrior will despise the husbandman,  
 High birth and dignity will bear no fruit ;  
 Then men will rob each other, none will know  
 A blessing from a curse, and secret dealing  
 Prevail o'er open, while the hearts of men  
 Will turn to flint, sire will be foe to son  
 And son will scheme 'gainst sire ; a worthless slave  
 Will be the Sháh, high birth and majesty  
 Will count for nothing ; no one will be loyal.  
 There will be tyranny of soul and tongue ;  
 A mongrel race—Iránian, Turkman, Arab—  
 Will come to be and talk in gibberish.<sup>2</sup>

These passages, in Professor Nöldeke's opinion,<sup>3</sup> clearly refer to Mahínúd and to the circumstances of the poet's own time. The latter occurs nearly at the end of the poem, and is put into the mouth of the commander of the Persian host just before the fatal battle of Kádisiyya, A.D. 637.

At length the great work is finished, but the poet's mood is still one of despondence:—

When five and sixty years had passed me by  
 I viewed my work with more anxiety,  
 But as my yearning to achieve it grew  
 My fortune's star receded from my view.  
 Great men and learned Persians had for me  
 My work all copied out gratuitously  
 While I sat looking on, and thou hadst said  
 That I was toiling for my daily bread.  
 Naught but their praises had I for my part  
 And, while they praised, I had a broken heart.  
 The mouths of their old money-bags were tied,

<sup>1</sup> C, 1294.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* 2064.

<sup>3</sup> NIN, 26.

Whereat mine ardent heart was mortified.  
 'Alí Dílám and 'bú Dulaf these two  
 Helped me to bear mine undertaking thro' ;  
 These ardent souls, my fellow townsmen, they  
 Were kind and sped my work in every way.  
 Ha'fy son of Kutib, a Persian he,  
 Would not take from me and withhold my fee,  
 But furnished gold and silver, clothes and meat ;  
 From him I got incitement, wings and feet.  
 Taxation, root and branch, I know not, I  
 Loll on my quilt at ease. When seventy  
 And one years of my life had passed me by  
 The heavens bowed down before my poetry.  
 For five and thirty years I bore much pain  
 Here in this Wayside Inn in hope of gain,  
 But all the five and thirty years thus past  
 Naught helped ; men gave my travail to the blast,  
 And my hopes too have gone for evermore  
 Now that mine age hath almost reached fourscore.

For ever lusty be Mahmúd the king,  
 His heart still glad, his head still flourishing.  
 Him both in public and in private I  
 Have praised so that my words will never die.  
 Of praises from the great I had my store,  
 The praises that I give to him are more.  
 For ever may he live, this prudent king,  
 And see his undertakings prospering.  
 I have bequeathed as his memorial  
 This book, six times ten thousand lines in all.<sup>1</sup>

There are other references by the poet to his work and his hopes concerning it, but it is believed that the most important passages have now been set forth. If then we had no other sources of information than these, what should we gather from them? That the poet in the prime of life succeeded to the work and materials of Dakíkí, and laboured at his task for many years under various patrons but not receiving such recognition as in his own opinion his deserts merited ;

<sup>1</sup> C, 2095. The readings of the names of the poet's friends are taken from Nizámí's quotation of this passage. BCM, 79.

that he thought he saw his opportunity in the accession of Mahmūd and did his best to avail himself of it; that he received some encouragement if not from the Sultán himself at least from Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl, the chief minister, and achieved his task early in A.D. 1010; that for some years before that date there had been opposition to him at Court, his work vilified and his character misrepresented; that these intrigues ultimately prevailed, and that he never received the reward for his labours that a perhaps somewhat too fervid temperament had led him to hope for or expect; that for years after the completion of the poem he still hoped on, was nearly eighty when he finally despaired, but to the last continued to praise Mahmūd.

Now if we seek to look further into the causes of Firdausi's disappointment we have at hand a plausible and even probable explanation, but one for which we have, at present at all events, no direct evidence. Just about the time when the Shāhnāma was completed Mahmūd's chief minister, Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl, fell into disgrace. He had once been in the service of the Sámánids, but when Mahmūd became governor of Khurásán in A.D. 994, his father, Subuktagín, applied to the Sámánid prince, Nuh bin Mansúr, for the services of Abú'l 'Abbás on behalf of his son. Accordingly he became the steward of Mahmūd's household at Nishápúr, and, after Mahmūd's accession, chief minister. He is said to have made use of his position to enrich himself, and his administration is stated to have been so oppressive that Khurásán was devastated and depopulated, but this of course need not be taken too literally. The Sultán, however, became concerned with regard to the diminution of the levies and the falling off in the revenue, and remonstrated with Abú'l 'Abbás, who threatened to resign. In A.D. 1011, after long negotiations, the Sultán, enraged at his conduct, imposed a fine of



100,000 dínárs upon him, and, as he still deferred payment, had him imprisoned and put to the torture. His enemies availed themselves of his disgrace, and of the Sultán's displeasure and absence on one of his numerous campaigns, to have the fallen minister done to death in A.D. 1013.<sup>1</sup>

The suggestion then is that the poet lost his chance owing to the troubles in which the minister became involved just about the time when the *Sháhnáma* would be ready for presentation to Mahmúd; and when we picture to ourselves the remorseless intrigues of an Oriental court—intrigues sticking at no atrocity and shrinking from no meanness—we can well imagine that if the unfortunate minister really had taken an interest in the poet's work, there would not be wanting those who would only be too willing out of mere spite to strike at the patron through the poet.

However this may be, the latter, indignant at the treatment he had undergone, or smarting under the sense of unmerited neglect, set about writing a Satire on Sultán Mahmúd, of which, according to Nizámí-i-Arúdí, only the following five couplets survived in his days.

In the extant version of the Satire that we follow,<sup>2</sup> which consists of 102 couplets, the above couplets

<sup>1</sup> KUR, 396. Cf. too EHI, ii. 486; iv. 148.

<sup>2</sup> C, 63.

appear not in this order but separately as the 11th, 27th, 83rd, 72nd, and 76th respectively, with some differences of reading. Here they read rather disconnectedly, but have an appropriate context in the extant version of the Satire. We learn from them that one of the charges brought against the poet was that he was a heretic of the sect of the Shí'ites, and this may have weighed with the orthodox Mahmúd. The poet for his part develops the old taunt of the slave who became a Sháh. If now we turn to the extant version of the Satire, and accept it as genuine in spite of what Nizámí says, we get additional and interesting information. The poet speaks of himself as Firdausí of Tús. Tús was formerly a city of much importance in Khurásán, and its ruins are still to be seen some seventeen miles N.N.W. of Mashad. He tells us that he spent thirty years over the Sháhnáma, that it was presented to Mahmúd, who had promised a worthy but gave him a very inadequate reward—little more than one-seventh of what he expected—and that he publicly gave away the whole of it to a street sherbet-seller in payment for a drink. He also informs us that Mahmúd threatened to have him trampled to death by elephants, and he ends by cursing the Sultán.

We now pass on to what Nizámí has to tell us more than a hundred years after the death of the poet.

Abú'l Kásim Firdausí was one of the landed proprietors of Tús. He was a native of a village called Bazh, which formed part of one of the quarters, districts, or suburbs of the city. He was a man of importance and of independent means, which were derived from the income of his land. He had one daughter, and the sole object of his labours on the Sháhnáma was to obtain the funds necessary to provide her with a dowry. When he had completed the

work it was transcribed by 'Alí Dīlam and recited by Abú Dulaf. He was much in favour with Ha'iy, son of Kutība, the governor of the city, who treated him with all consideration in the matter of taxation.

'Alí Dīlam transcribed the Shāhnāma in seven volumes, and Firdausī set off for Ghaznī with Abú Dulaf. Ahmad Hasan Maimandī, Mahmūd's chief minister, befriended him, and the poem was duly presented to the Sultān, who accepted it. The minister, however, had enemies, who pointed out that Firdausī was a heretic, as some of the verses in his Prelude to the Shāhnāma showed,<sup>1</sup> and the result was that the poet got much less than he expected. He went to the bath in deep chagrin, and on coming out divided the sum that he had received between the bath-man and a sherbet-seller of whom he had bought a drink. Then fearing the wrath of Mahmūd he fled to Harāt, where he lay hidden for six months. Mahmūd sent messengers after him to Tús, but not finding him they turned back, on which the poet ventured to go there himself, taking the Shāhnāma with him.<sup>2</sup> Thence he journeyed on to Tabaristān, whose ruler treated him kindly. There Firdausī wrote his Satire on Mahmūd, read it to the chief, and offered to dedicate the Shāhnāma to him instead of to the Sultān. The chief of Tabaristān, however, was himself one of Mahmūd's vassals, and he persuaded the poet to let the dedication stand, and bought the Satire of him for one hundred thousand drachms—a thousand for each couplet. He then destroyed it, and Firdausī himself destroyed his own rough copy, only five verses remaining extant—the five already given. We here append our version of the Satire. Assuming that it

<sup>1</sup> §§ 1 and 7. •

<sup>2</sup> If Mahmūd was really seriously offended with Firdausī it seems strange that the latter's estate at Tús was not confiscated on this occasion.

is in essentials the poet's handiwork the reader probably will agree with the prudent chief of Tabaristán in his opinion that the sooner it was suppressed the better.

Before resuming our summary of Nizámí's account we should mention that later on the indomitable poet wrote his second great poem, "Yúsuf and Zulíkha." This work is still extant in MS., and a printed edition is understood to be in preparation. He tells us in his Introduction that he wrote it at the suggestion of a high official of the Dílámids with a view of dedicating it to the ruling Dílámid prince. The poet seems to have quitted Tabaristán, where a prolonged stay might have been not without risk both to himself and to his friendly entertainer, and to have journeyed further to the west, where beyond the reach of Mahmúd's wrath (if Mahmúd really concerned himself about the matter at all) he wrote the above-mentioned work.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately he returned to his native city of Tús, and we may conclude this account of the calamity of an author by summarising the rest of what Nizámí has to tell us. He no doubt gives us, as he professes to do, the received tradition of the time. Sultán Mahmúd, induced by the representations of his chief minister (Hasan Maimandí?) ultimately repented of his treatment of the poet. He accordingly gave directions that sixty thousand dinárs' worth of indigo should be carried to Firdausí at Tús with a suitable apology. This was done and the indigo arrived safely, but as the caravan that bore it entered by one gate the poet's corpse was being borne out to burial by another, outside which was a garden belonging to him, and there he was interred, because in the orthodox view of a local preacher he was a heretic, and therefore must not be suffered to lie in the Musulmán Cemetery. He left a daughter—a high-spirited lady—who refused to accept the Sultán's gift, and the money was therefore spent in repairing the hostelry of Cháha, on the road between Marv and Níshápúr. The poet seems to have died

<sup>1</sup> NIN, 27.

A.D. 1020–1021, at the age of about eighty. Nizámí visited his tomb, A.D. 1116–1117.

It has not seemed necessary to the present writer to enter more fully into the interesting subject of the poet's biography. The reader will find ampler details in Professor Nöldeke's invaluable "*Iranische National-epos*," and in Professor Browne's most useful translation of Nizámí, both of which works are obtainable in a convenient form. It is not worth while to reproduce here the accounts of later biographers—those mentioned at the beginning of the present chapter—and of other writers. Some of their anecdotes will, however, be inserted in appropriate places in the course of this translation. A word of warning should be added. The present writer has confined himself, except where otherwise stated, to the figures given, as to the poet's age, &c., in the two texts from which our translation of the *Sháhnáma* has been made. They seem to be generally consistent, but other MSS. give other figures, and if their readings are adopted other conclusions naturally follow.

The present writer, as far as he is concerned, would gladly terminate the history of the writing and reception of the *Sháhnáma* at the point where the poet himself left it in concluding that work; at all events pains has been taken to distinguish Firdausí's own account from that given by others. It only remains to add that late in life when writing "*Yúsuf and Zulíkha*" he affected to condemn his greatest achievement as a pack of idle tales. Old age, disappointment, and other circumstances may well have contributed to warp his judgment, but we cannot doubt that in his heart of hearts he was as conscious of what constituted his best title to fame as when he penned the concluding words of the *Sháhnáma*:—

I shall live on, the seed of words have I  
Flung broad-cast, and henceforth I shall not die.

The *Sháhnáma* of Firdausí is one of the great epic poems of the world. The author has left on record that it originally consisted of sixty thousand couplets. All existing MSS., however, even when eked out by obvious interpolations, fall short of that number by several thousand. Part has therefore been lost or else the poet spoke in round numbers. At all events enough remains, and to all appearance pretty much as he wrote it. The authorship, so far as the present writer is aware, has never been disputed.

The poem is in rhymed couplets, and its metre—the typical heroic metre of the language in which it is written—may thus be indicated :—

— — — | — — — | — — — | — — —

Such a line as

The Pharaohs of Egypt, the Cæsars of Rome,  
represents the metre of the original.

The poet wrote in almost pure Persian. The admixture of Arabic is slight, and in all probability would be slighter if we had the *Sháhnáma* precisely as Firdausí left it. Some Arabic the poet was bound to use—terms, for instance, in connection with his religion—but copyists, it seems probable, are responsible for most of the rest.

The poet's theme is the story of his fatherland and folk, from the Creation to the Muhammadan conquest, set forth in the form of a metrical chronicle. His subject-matter he derived from many sources, mythical, religious, historical, and popular—a classification which of course involves many cross-divisions.

His method, as might be expected, differs widely from Homer's. The contrast is in fact striking. Homer effectually hides his own personality. He plunges into the middle of his subject, and makes the period of his action as brief as possible. Selecting one central

motive he weaves round it only so much of the subject-matter at his disposal as he can employ with tolerable consistency. His web is closely woven, and the workmanship so exquisite that comparatively few indications are left to betray the nature of the raw material.

Firdausí, on the other hand, takes us into his confidence from the first. In direct violation of the Horatian precept he begins from Leda's egg and earlier, and the period of his action extends over thousands of years. He uses all the epic material, good, bad, and indifferent, on which he can lay hands. His web is open-work and its design unsymmetrical. He makes no secret of his method, but tells us what his materials are and how he obtained them. (He shows us in fact his loom in action, and calls our attention to the bright, many-coloured threads of myth, romance, and history which are being woven therein. )

It will be readily understood that the method of the Eastern poet leads to inconsistencies and difficulties, chronological and otherwise, for which the reader should be prepared. He will find, for instance, in the mythical portions of the poem at least, the chief heroes living on through successive ages; described as old and yet fighting with all the vigour of early manhood; dropping out of sight and apparently forgotten only to reappear in their pristine vigour later on. The explanation is twofold. In the first place several of the characters of the poem were originally divine or semi-divine beings, and though introduced to us as human have in some cases not wholly lost their superhuman attributes. And in the second place the popular mythology was, not, and was not designed to be, consistent. It told legends of the same hero, assigning them to different reigns, ages, and localities. A Western poet would have taken



them all and forced as much as suited him into the mould of a brief action; the Eastern poet takes them at full length, and inserts them where he finds them, wholly regardless of the fact that by so doing he extends life far beyond the span of mortals.

The poem is divided into reigns. Of these there are forty-nine, and they with one dynasty, which is reckoned as a single reign, make up the fifty heads under which the subject-matter of the poem is disposed. The reigns are those of the mythic or historic Sháhs or kings of Persia, who are divided into four dynasties: I. The Pishdádian, of ten Sháhs, and lasting 2441 years. II. The Kaiánian, of ten Sháhs, and lasting 732 years. III. The Ashkánian, which is reckoned as one reign, lasting 200 years. IV. The Sásánian, of twenty-nine Sháhs, and lasting 501 years. The space of time covered is therefore 3874 years.

The poem may also be divided into two periods—a mythic and a historic. This distinction is based not so much on the nature of the subject-matter as on the names of the chief characters. At a certain point in the poem the names cease to be mythic and become historic. The Mythic Period extends from the beginning of the narrative down to the reigns of the last two Sháhs of the Kaiánian dynasty. These and the remainder of the poem form the Historic Period. The Sháhs in question are Dárá, son of Dáráb, better known as Darius Codomanus, and Sikandar—Alexander the Great.

The chief characters of the poem are:—

I. The personified powers of good and evil. The religion of the ancient Persians, from which they became converted to Muhammadanism, was that known as Fire-worship, Dualism, or Zoroastrianism. These may be taken to represent roughly three aspects of its growth and development. It was called Fire-worship from its chief visible object of adoration—a very ancient cult;

Dualism from its chief tenet—the belief that the universe owed its existing form to the opposing creations and ceaseless conflicts of two supernatural beings, a good and an evil, Urmuzd and Áhriman;<sup>1</sup> and Zoroastrianism from its legendary prophet, who may be taken to typify its priestly or ceremonial element. Urmuzd and Áhriman pervade the whole poem, and all that happens for good or ill is attributed either directly or indirectly to the one or the other. They are assumed to be constantly engaged in strife with each other, and especially on the battlefield of the world, where the struggle is carried on chiefly by means of the forces, principalities, and powers which they have called into being, or whose actions they inspire.

If the poet had confined himself to the use of the names Urmuzd and Áhriman this antagonism would have been much more marked. He was probably placed, however, in a very difficult position, not only as a Muhammadan himself but also as a poet eager for recognition at the hands of a fanatically Muhammadan Sultán. The result is a compromise. He seldom uses the word Urmuzd, but in its place such terms as Maker of the world, World-lord, the All-mighty, the righteous Judge or simply God, but hardly ever the Muhammadan Allah. On the other hand he employs the expression Áhriman with great frequency, often substituting for it, however, the word Dív, which may be rendered Fiend, and occasionally the name of the Muhammadan evil principle Iblís. Practically his conception of the good principle is Muhammadan in all but the name, while his evil principle is no longer the formidable Zoroastrian Áhriman, but approximates

<sup>1</sup> There is a tendency among modern Zoroastrians and some scholars to modify or even deny the dualism, but to do this is to deprive Zoroastrianism of its most characteristic feature, and its best title to be considered one of the great religions of the world. See DFKHP, ii. 187; HEP, 303–305.

rather to the Muhammadan Iblís, or to the Devil of the Bible. This being premised, however, it is proposed to retain the expressions Urmuzd and Áhriman in the Introduction, as being on the whole the most suitable and convenient, and of course in the poem itself wherever they occur.

II. The Sháh's and other kings or heroes. These, so far as they are historical, may be left to speak for themselves, but those that are mythical need a word of explanation. The dualistic conception of the universe, while it tended to exalt Urmuzd and Áhriman, did so at the expense of the other deities of the ancient nature-worship who gradually became grouped in inferior capacities, according to the popular conceptions of them, round one or other of the two great principles, the beneficent round Urmuzd and the maleficent round Áhriman. In the course of time many of them came to be regarded as ancient earthly rulers and heroes, and as such they are represented in the poem, the good for the most part as Íránian and the evil as those of other races. All the chief mythical characters were once themselves gods or demigods, or were credited with such ancestors in tradition.

Direct supernatural agency is, however, infrequent in the Sháhnáma. On one side we have Urmuzd, who sometimes intervenes by his messenger and agent the angel Surúsh, and on the other Áhriman, who acts by means of his instruments the dívs, or his adherents the warlocks and witches. We have instances of white magic as well as of black. The fabulous Símurgh too—a bird somewhat resembling the roc of the "Arabian Nights," but endowed with wisdom and articulate speech—plays an important part. Dreams, especially those in which the dead appear, are regarded as veridical, and the evil eye is much dreaded. Presentiments are held to be authentic, and use is made of amulets, elixirs, and divining-cups. The most potent agent throughout

is destiny, which is represented as God's purpose with respect to man as revealed in the heavens by the aspects of the stars and planets. There is no more impressive picture in the poem than that which the poet gives us of the remorseless process of the sky, whose revolutions gradually grind down the strongest, and fill the vulgar with amaze at what they term the turns of fortune. To the sage and reader of the stars, however, the future is spread out like a book, and the astrologer, with his planispheres, astrolabes, calculations of nativities, and predictions generally, plays a considerable part in the poem. Destiny, as represented to us by the poet, is made up of two distinct elements which he does not attempt to reconcile—the Muhammadan and the Zoroastrian. The former may be summed up for the reader in two texts from the Bible:—"I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am the Lord, that doeth all these things;"<sup>1</sup> and "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"<sup>2</sup>

The Zoroastrian conception is entirely different. Urmuzd and Áhriman are as distinct as light from darkness, and a hard and fast line is drawn between good and evil, whether physical or moral. Light, immortality, health, and all that is good in the worlds of mind and matter proceed from Urmuzd; darkness, death, disease, and all that is evil from Áhriman. Urmuzd created man and fashioned the twelve houses of the heavens that they might pour down their kindly influence upon him; Áhriman broke into the creation of Urmuzd and created the planets to run counter to the stars and cross their purposes. Destiny, therefore, from this point of view, being the resultant of two opposing forces, is an extremely logical deduction well borne out by the events of history and the

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xlv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Job ii. 10.

incidents of life to an Eastern eye, but corresponds rather to what we should call fortune than to absolute fate. The Zoroastrian view, which is that of the poet's authorities, predominates over the Muhammadan, which is that of his religion. The practical result is that in the poem the sky is looked upon as the ultimate arbiter of human affairs, and often as acting wantonly and capriciously with the ruthlessness of a celestial Juggernaut. Yet the poet and his characters never fail to appeal to destiny proper on occasions when it suits them so to do, he to justify the ways of God to man, and they to make excuse for evil done or the doing of it. "It was so decreed," pleads the evil-doer; "And so was the penalty," replies the avenger. At other times again the poet seems to hold that all is hopeless confusion, and that we cannot tell head from tail or top from bottom.

The leading motive of the *Sháhnáma*, so far as it can be said to have one, is Áhriman's envy of man—the creation of Urmuzd. The first attempt of the evil principle to destroy mankind once for all, in the person of their great progenitor, having failed, his next is to seduce them from their allegiance to their Creator, and in this he is largely successful; race becomes opposed to race, the faithful followers of Urmuzd are persecuted by the perverts of Áhriman, and recurring acts of provocation or revenge form a series of subsidiary motives which serve to keep alive the ancient feud. These are most prominent in the earlier portion of the Mythic period, towards the end of which a new motive is introduced by the advent of the great prophet of Urmuzd—Zarduhsht or Zoroaster. Side by side with this outward visible struggle there is the inward, invisible one going on in the mind of the individual. This is more insisted on in the Historic period where the moral aspects of the struggle are discoursed on at large, and the deadly sins are

personified in accordance to Zoroastrian theology as divs or fiends in the service of Áhriman, who strive to get the mastery over the soul of man.

The historical relations of the Íránians with other Indo-European peoples, with the Semites and with the Túránians, as sketched briefly in the previous chapter, are indicated in the poem by the mythical legends of Zakhák and of the three sons of Farídún and their descendants. Zakhák represents the idolatrous element in the poem, and therefore the Semites in particular, who were the most idolatrous race with whom the Íránians came into contact. The Assyrians were notoriously idolatrous, and so were the Arabs up to the days of Muhammad. In the poem all idol-worshippers, whether of Semitic race or not, are regarded as descendants of Zakhák. The eldest son of Farídún—Salm—represents the western division of the Indo-European race; the second son Túr the Túránian, and the youngest son Íraj the Western Aryan or Íránian. The legendary accounts in the poem of Zakhák's conquest of Írán, of his overthrow by Farídún, of the partition of the world by the latter between his three sons, of the murder of Íraj by his two elder brothers, and of the great feud which thus originated, really set forth the historical relations of three of the great races of mankind as seen, from the point of view of the descendants of Íraj, through the haze of myth and legend. As to the comparative importance of these relations to the Íránians, native tradition has no hesitation in assigning the first place to the representatives of Túr, the second to those of Zakhák, and the third to those of Salm; and accordingly in the poem the struggles of the Íránians with the Túránians occupy more space than those with all other races combined. Yet the bitterest feud is with Zakhák. In other cases it is a family quarrel, but Zakhák is of another stock—a man forbid. However,

all the greatest heroes of the poem spring from unions between members of races thus antagonistic. The three sons of Faridún marry the daughters of an Arab king, and their supposed descendants are therefore of mixed race. Rustam is from Zakhák upon his mother's side. Siyáwush and Kai Khusrau both have Túránian mothers. Asfandiyár and Sikandar have Rúman mothers.<sup>1</sup>

We have also to note that, according to Íránian tradition, Urmuzd did not leave himself altogether without witness even in the lands and peoples most given over to Áhriman. In the case of the Arabs we have the dynasty of Al Munzir, which is always represented as being friendly to the Íránians. This dynasty ruled at Hira. In the case of the Hindus we have the dynasty of Kaid, which is always kindly and helpful. In the case of the Túránians the tendency to goodwill is very marked in some of the characters. One of Afrásiyab's own brothers becomes an arrant traitor in his zeal for the Íránian interest, and suffers for it at the hand of his justly indignant sovereign. The most striking instance, however, is that of the great and good Pírán, Afrásiyab's cousin, counsellor, and commander-in-chief. Though his loyalty to his own master is absolutely stainless and unimpeached, he always shows himself most friendly and generous to the Íránians, striving for peace and for a better understanding between the two races. He lives to see his honest endeavours foiled and his well-meant counsels turn out ill, but his honesty is so transparent and recognised that even the fierce tyrant whom he serves,

<sup>1</sup> History and legend alike throw considerable doubt on the paternity of Alexander the Great (Sikandar). Íránian patriotism avails itself of this fact to explain that Philip married his daughter to Sháh Dáráb, that Dáráb took a dislike to her and sent her back to her father, at whose court she gave birth to Alexander, who was brought up as Philip's own son. Íránian *amour propre* is thus saved, as the great conqueror is made out to be an Íránian himself—the eldest born of Sháh Dáráb.

and who suffers most for having followed his advice, has hardly a word to say against him, and he only gives up the leadership of the host with death. It is a well paid compliment by the poet to the Turkman race. It was no doubt his own contribution toward a good understanding, and happily he could not foresee the horrors which the eleventh and subsequent centuries held in store for Írán at the hands of the nations of the North.

For the preservation of the subject-matter of the *Sháhnáma* we are chiefly indebted to two of the classes into which Firdausí tells us ancient Íránian society was divided—the priestly class and the agricultural class—in other words the Magi and the *Dihkáns*. The Magi were the priests of the true Medes or *Madá*, among whom they formed a caste or tribe. Originally fire-priests, as their own name for themselves—*Áthravans*, literally “fire-men”—shows,<sup>1</sup> they became closely associated with, even if they did not originate, the Dualism, and Zoroastrianism of later times. Antiquity, which liberally credited them with all the attributes of ancient priesthood, knew them as the Magi—the great or mighty,<sup>2</sup> and later ages are indebted to them for the potent words “magic” and “magician.” In their historical seat in Atropatene, or in the modern form of the word *Ázarbíján* (which has been variously explained to mean the land of the seed, of the descent of, or that guards the fire), and still more in their legendary home in Karabagh, they dwelt in the neighbourhood of scenes of natural marvel. Earthquakes are frequent there, mud-volcanoes, hot springs, and naphtha wells abound. Flames issuing from clefts in the rocks have been ablaze from time immemorial, and in autumn the exhalations from the soil form a phosphorescence that at night wraps whole districts in sheets of harmless flame. Even in parts of the Caspian the vapours bubble up,

<sup>1</sup> DZA, i. li, 1st ed.

<sup>2</sup> Skeat, *Etym. Dict.*, s.v.



may be ignited and will go on burning, over several square yards of water till a gust of wind extinguishes them. The scene from all accounts is at times sufficiently impressive even to the modern eye, and we can easily imagine what fire in its purest form and highest expression—clear, smokeless, lambent flames, burning on unfed apparently and self-sustaining century after century—must have been to the un-rationalistic gaze of primitive antiquity. In the presence of those flames all other fires must have seemed but “broken lights.” Elsewhere they were hard to kindle, needed constant care, and were dimmed by smoke and vapours, but here they burned as in the Burning Bush. It was no wonder that the place came to be looked upon as “Holy Ground,” and that a Cult of Fire grew up there in the dim and distant past. We can well imagine too how famous the priesthood of such a Cult would become amid such surroundings. The priest of ancient times was the man of letters, the sage, the leech, the astrologer and the man of occult lore and grammarye, and this priesthood dwelt in a region which is not even now robbed of all its ancient glamour by the fact that it is the scene of the greatest petroleum industry in the world. Here Prometheus stole the fire from heaven and paid the penalty in some Caucasian gorge. Along it from north to south lay a great highway of the nations, across it from east to west ran one of the great trade routes, and the riches of India were borne from Kábul to Balkh, from Balkh down the Oxus to the Caspian,<sup>1</sup> and thence through the land of Medea and of the Golden Fleece to the Euxine and the west. It is of course impossible to affirm that so widespread a cult as Fire-worship had its origin in one particular locality, but we shall

<sup>1</sup> The Oxus in ancient times flowed into the Caspian instead of into the Aral Sea as at present.

be safe in stating that here was a most important centre of it, and in claiming for its priests a proportionate status and sanctity.<sup>1</sup> We have already seen that Írán is a land of sharp contrasts of physical good and evil. There the kindly reticences and concealments of nature, the blue haze of distance and the melting of line into line, are absent, there is no neutral territory, no common meeting-ground; all is clear, sharp, well defined and recognisable beyond the possibility of mistake and at a glance as good or evil. In the regions south of the Caucasus these contrasts are accentuated, and there, it would seem, grew up Dualism suggested and justified by its surroundings.

The doctrines of the Magi, which it is beyond our scope to enter into except incidentally and by way of illustration, appear in early times to have been restricted, if not to the Magi themselves, at all events to the Medes whose priests they were. It was not until nearly the end of the sixth century before the Christian era and after the suicide of Cambyses, the son of Cyrus the Great, that the Magi first became supreme in the vast empire which the latter had founded, for now we have evidence that neither he nor his son was the enthusiastic proselytiser of Zoroastrianism, that they were both formerly supposed to be, but at most tolerated it along with the other faiths of their world-wide empire.<sup>2</sup> After the death of Cambyses, however, the Magi rose to power in the person of the Magus Gaumata—the false Smerdis of the Greeks—who seized the vacant throne and began, as we learn from the inscriptions of Darius Hystaspis, his slayer and successor, to overthrow the temples of

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the natural phenomena of these regions see KA, i. 44, and Marvin, "The Region of the Eternal Fire," *ch. xi.*, where many interesting passages are collected. The phenomena are most striking to the north of Karabagh at Baku, the peninsula of Apsheron and the island of Sviatoi (Holy Island) lying off it.

<sup>2</sup> SHC, 497.

the gods in his iconoclast zeal.<sup>1</sup> As Darius further informs us that he restored these temples, and also at the same time describes himself as a worshipper of Urmuzd,<sup>2</sup> we may assume that it was in the course of his reign that Zoroastrianism became the state-religion of the Persian empire. He also appears about B.C. 505 to have adopted the Zoroastrian calendar in the place of the old Persian one that he had used up till then, and this fact goes to support the assumption made above.<sup>3</sup> The Magophonia or slaughter of the Magi mentioned by Herodotus,<sup>4</sup> which has sometimes been adduced as a proof that they could not have been supreme in Persia so early as the times of Darius Hystaspis,<sup>5</sup> is not really opposed to this view. It is pretty evident that the Magophonia was not aimed against the Magi in general, but was merely an annual celebration of the overthrow of one particular Magus—the impostor and usurper Gaumata—and his personal followers.<sup>6</sup> Whether the Magi, in spite of the high position they had gained, ever succeeded in making their doctrines popular with the masses of the first Persian empire may well be doubted. One at least of the successors of Darius—Artaxerxes II. (B.C. 404–361)—seems to have relapsed into something very like idolatry,<sup>7</sup> and with the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great the power of the Magi waned for a time.

Rightly or wrongly Zoroastrian tradition couples Alexander with Zahbák and Afrásiyáb as one of the three arch enemies of the faith.<sup>8</sup> With the intro-

<sup>1</sup> RP, vii. 89–92.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> WPT, v. xlv.

<sup>4</sup> Herod. iii. 79.

<sup>5</sup> RSM, 636, note.

<sup>6</sup> DHA, v. 194.

<sup>7</sup> DZA, ii. 53.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* i. xlviii. This notion seems to have been firmly fixed in the minds of the faithful. We are told that in the year A.D. 1511 Zoroastrians resident in Persia wrote to co-religionists in India a letter in which they stated “that never since the rule of Kaiomars had they suffered more than what they were then undergoing. In sooth, they declared that they were more oppressed than their race had ever been at the hands of the tyrants Zohak, Afrasiab, Tur and Alexander.” DFKHP, i. 56.

duction of Greek ideas, Greek science and Greek polytheism, there can be no doubt that the bulk of the population relapsed into idolatry, if indeed it had ever emerged. During the next five centuries the Magi must have had much ado to keep alive the doctrines, ritual, and sacred traditions of their faith. The seductions of Greek civilisation were followed by the brutalities of Parthian barbarism, and any modification of these was, during the first centuries at all events of Parthian rule, in the direction of Greek culture. The Parthian monarchs describe themselves as philhellenic on their coins. The Magi, however, were well equipped for the struggle. They had a great reputation. They held a faith in many respects much in advance of their times, and one too that found its justification in the strange natural phenomena and sharp contrasts of physical good and evil that characterise Írán. They had kept alive too, at a time when ancient Persian was passing into rapid phonetic decay, the ancient language of their race—the Median—with its inflections and archaisms, as will appear later on. Lastly, they were a priesthood practising the peculiar custom of Khvaitúk-das, or next of kin marriage, which, though most repugnant to the sentiments of mankind at large, must certainly have tended to preserve their faith from the dangerous external and foreign influences which an indiscriminate practice of marriage would have entailed. That the Magi practised Khvaitúk-das in the days of the Parthian monarchy we may learn from Catullus.<sup>1</sup> The three principal seats of the Magi seem to have been at Shíz, Rai, and Balkh. Shíz, the Persian Gazn,

<sup>1</sup> Nascatur Magus ex Gelli matrisque nefando  
conjugio, et discat Persicum haruspicium.  
Nam Magus ex matre et gnato gignatur oportet,  
si vera est Persarum impia relligio.

*Carmen*, lxxxix., ed. C. H. Weise.

For Khvaitúk-das see WPT, ii. 389. Cf. GHP, i. 89.

is to be looked for at Takht-i-Sulaiman near the southern frontier of Ázarbáján. It contained the famous fire-temple of Ázarakhsh, which appears to be a contraction of Ázar-i-Zarduhsht, or the fire of Zarduhsht, who is supposed to have instituted it. To this temple it was the custom of the Sháhhs of Persia in pre-Muhammadian times to make pilgrimages afoot.<sup>1</sup> Rai, which was near Tihrán, seems to have been the centre of a priestly principality of great antiquity, whose priest-prince was known as the Zarduhsht. It was finally destroyed by the Muhammadans.<sup>2</sup> Balkh was the scene of Zarduhsht or Zoroaster's most successful missionary effort, which led to the conversion of Sháh Gushtásp. Here, too, the prophet is said to have been slain when the city was taken by the Túránian king Arjásp. Internal evidence seems to show that Firdausí used traditions emanating from each of the above centres in the Sháhnáma.

Of the early literature of the Magi we can only assume that the theogonies or sacred hymns which they chanted in the days of Herodotus<sup>3</sup> were such as we find in their extant scriptures, just as we find the peculiar rites and ceremonies, which he describes as being practised by them,<sup>4</sup> still in operation at a much later date. The tradition with regard to the literature is as follows: The original scriptures were revealed to Zoroaster by Urmuzd. Zoroaster preached them to Sháh Gushtásp, whose capital was at Balkh. Gushtásp ordered the original to be deposited in the treasury of Shapígán and copies to be made and disseminated, one of which was laid up in the fortress of documents. When "the evil destined villain Alexander" invaded Írán the copy in the fortress of documents was burnt; that in the treasury of

<sup>1</sup> DZA, i. xlix, 1st ed.

<sup>3</sup> Herod. ii. 132.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* xlvi.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* 140.

Shapígán fell into Alexander's hands and was translated by his command into Greek.<sup>1</sup> King Valkash ordered a collection to be made of the scriptures, which in his days existed in Írán in a scattered state owing to the disruption caused by the Macedonian conquest.<sup>2</sup> Ardshír, the son of Pápak, who overthrew the Parthians and restored the Íránian monarchy, also made a collection of the scriptures. He employed for that purpose the high-priest Tausar, who reproduced a similitude of the original as it had existed in the treasury of Shapígán.<sup>3</sup> Shápúr, the son of Ardshír, made a collection of writings of a non-religious character dealing with medicine, astronomy, and other scientific subjects that had been scattered among the Hindus and Rúmans, and ordered them to be incorporated with what had already been brought together, which was done.<sup>4</sup> Shápúr, the son of Hurmuzd, instituted a tribunal for the determination of all points of disputed doctrine. These points were settled by ordeal, and thenceforth the Sháh proclaimed and insisted on uniformity.<sup>5</sup>

With regard to this account legend places the birth-place and home of Zoroaster in Írán-vej.<sup>6</sup> Here on the Mountain of the Holy Questions he met Urmuzd face to face, and received from him in a series of dialogues the tenets of the faith. Here too the prophet was assailed by the demon Búiti sent by Áhriman, and subsequently tempted by the latter in person. Both were, however, worsted, and Zoroaster began his missionary career.<sup>7</sup> His great success seems to have been at Balkh, one of the chief centres of Aryan civilisation. This we may interpret as meaning that Zoroastrianism spread from West to East along the line of the great trade-route. The extant portions of the Zoroastrian

<sup>1</sup> WPT, iv. xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* 413.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* xxxi.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* 414.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> DZA, i. 3, notes.

<sup>7</sup> WPT, i. 141.

scriptures have many allusions to Balkh and Eastern Irán generally, and in the later part of the Mythic period of the poem the scene is shifted thither. With regard to Alexander the Great the legend is that he burnt these scriptures, which were written on twelve thousand ox-hides, at Persepolis.<sup>1</sup> During the domination of the Parthians Irán was broken up into a number of small tributary principalities under native chiefs, some of whom seem to have maintained a Magian priesthood and sacred fires of their own.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible that it may have been the rise of local Zoroastrian cults with divergent doctrines and ritual that led King Valkash, in his capacity of overlord, to make a collection of the scriptures with a view to the establishment of a canon and uniformity. Valkash himself has been well identified with the Parthian king Vologeses I. (A.D. 50-78), whose brother Tiridates is known to have been a Magus.<sup>3</sup> A letter written by Tausar to explain and justify his proceedings in regard to the reform of the faith is still in existence.<sup>4</sup> Ardshír, the son of Pápak, who employed him, was the first Sháh (A.D. 226-240) of the Sásánian dynasty and was himself a Magus.<sup>5</sup> The legendary destruction of the original scriptures was of course the excuse for adding to the canon in the reign of Shápur I. (A.D. 240-271) by restoring to their proper place the translations made under Alexander. With Shápur II. (A.D. 309-379) about A.D. 330 the canon was traditionally closed,<sup>6</sup> but as a matter of fact there was some amount of addition and revision as late as Chosroes I. (A.D. 531-579), after the disturbance to the faith caused by Mazdak.<sup>7</sup>

The language of the scriptures is commonly but

<sup>1</sup> DZA, i. xliii.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* xliv.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* xxxix.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* xli.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* xlvii.

<sup>7</sup> WPT, iv. xlii.

incorrectly known as Zend. It seems almost certain that really it should be known as Median.<sup>1</sup> Zend, *i.e.* Median, as preserved in its scriptures, and ancient Persian, as preserved in the inscriptions of the Achaemenids, are two sister-languages collaterally related to Sanscrit. How and when Zend became extinct, whether it still survives in a modified form in some modern dialect such as the Kúrd, does not seem to have been yet determined; but the existence of the Zandavasta indicates that it remained known to and used by the Magi in its inflectional form long after its sister-language the Persian had lost most of its inflections and had become greatly simplified. Zend may thus be regarded as being during the five centuries and a half which elapsed between the death of Darius Codomanus and the accession of Ardshír Pápakán the sacred language of the Magi—one known only to themselves and holding with them very much the same position as Sanscrit did among the Brahmans of India. During this period ancient Persian was itself being converted into middle Persian or Pahlaví.<sup>2</sup> Pahlaví, it should be explained, is the same word as Parthian, and in this connection means not the language spoken by the Parthians themselves, but that used under their rule by their Persian or Íránian

<sup>1</sup> "La comparaison," says the late Professor Darmesteter in the work in which he seems to have expressed his clearest views on the subject, "des textes avestéens avec ce que les anciens nous disent des croyances et des pratiques des Mages prouve que l'Avesta nous présente la croyance des Mages du temps d'Hérodote, d'Aristote, de Théopompe; d'autre part, les anciens sont unanimes à entendre par Mages les prêtres de la Médie. Il suit de là, par le témoignage externe des classiques joint au témoignage intrinsèque des livres zends et de la tradition native, que l'Avesta est l'œuvre des Mages, que le *zend est la langue de la Médie ancienne*, et que l'on aurait le droit de remplacer le nom impropre de *langue zende* par le terme de *langue médique*." DEI, i. 12.\*

<sup>2</sup> WPT, i. xi.

\* The italics are Professor Darmesteter's.



subjects.<sup>1</sup> To the people at large in Sásanian times the language in which the inscriptions of Darius Hystaspis and his successors had been written, and that of the Zoroastrian scriptures compiled by Tausar and others, were alike unintelligible. It accordingly became the custom in making copies to append a Pahlaví version, paraphrase, or comment on the original text. The scriptures themselves were known as the *Avasta*, and all comments thereon, whether in the original language or in Pahlaví, were known as the *Zend* or *Zand*. The chief *Zand* was of course the Pahlaví version of the *Avasta*, and the two combined became known as the *Avasta* and *Zand*, or more commonly as the *Zandavasta*.<sup>2</sup> Like the Bible it preserved in a literary form all that survived in the traditions of a race, and these were grouped round and told in connection with a line or lines of demigods or heroes, whose names show that they were originally those of the beneficent and maleficent impersonations of the ancient nature-worship of the Aryan people, before it broke up into its Indian and Íranian divisions. The names referred to are common in a somewhat altered form both to the *Zandavasta* and to the ancient Sanscrit hymns of India—the *Vedas*.<sup>3</sup> We may regard the traditions of the *Zandavasta* as essentially Magian, they were destined, however, to undergo a remarkable development and expansion in other hands.

The triumph of Zoroastrianism, the translation of the *Zandavasta* into Pahlaví, *i.e.* into the vernacular, and the consequent diffusion of the traditions of the Magi throughout Írán occurred at an epoch when five and a half centuries of alien rule (B.C. 331—A.D. 226)

<sup>1</sup> WPT, i. xii. Persians of all times seem always to have known their own language as Parsí. DEI, i. 38.

<sup>2</sup> DZA, i. xxxi, note 2.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance DHA, v. chapters 5 and 10.

had obliterated all but the vaguest reminiscences of the first Persian empire and the house of Achaemenes. The consequence was that the mythical demigods of the Zandavasta came to be regarded in Sásánian times as the historic Sháhs of the Íránian race. These and what was recorded of them in the Zandavasta formed a convenient epic framework whereon to hang legends of Assyrian oppression, Arab raids, Túránian invasions, wars with the West, the deeds of national or local heroes, and all the miscellaneous products of popular tradition and imagination. The development of the legends of the Zandavasta accordingly went on apace, and the chief agents in the process were the Dihkáns. This was the name given to the rural landowners of Írán. Firdausí himself seems to have been the son of a Dihkán. All the world over the rural populations are the depositories of national tradition. A notable instance occurred only so long ago as the last century when Dr. Elias Lönnrot, after years of wandering among the remotest districts of Finland, dwelling with the peasantry and taking down from their lips all that they knew of their popular songs, ultimately succeeded in collecting nearly twenty-three thousand verses which, arranged by him and divided into fifty runes, now form the national Finnish epic known as the Kalewala.<sup>1</sup> Much the same process went on in Írán at an earlier date. Traditions based on the Zandavasta were recited in the halls of the chiefs, at village festivals and at street-corners—a custom still obtaining in Persia—till in time the word Dihkán came to have a well recognised secondary meaning—that of professional story-teller, rustic bard, or wandering minstrel. In the course of the Sásánian dynasty these traditions were collected and put into writing. The result was variously known as the Bástán, Khudái, and Sháh Náma, with the respective meanings of History of

<sup>1</sup> *Ency. Brit.* ix. 219.

the Past, of the Lords, and of the Kings. In Baisinghar Khán's Preface already referred to there is an account of the *Bástán-náma* which may thus be summarised. Sháh Núshírwán collected the traditions and deposited the MSS. in his library. Yazdagird, the last of the Sásínians, employed the Dihkán Dánishwar to catalogue and supplement these histories and arrange them in chronological order from the reign of Gaiúmart to that of Khusrau Parwíz. At the time of the Muhammadan conquest of Persia they were sent to 'Umar, the commander of the faithful, who had them translated and only partially approved of their contents. In the general division of the Persian spoil the books fell into the hands of the Abyssinians, who presented them to King Jasha, who had them translated and highly commended them. They became well known in his dominions and in Hind, whence they were brought by Ya'kúb Lais, who commanded Abú Mansúr, son of Abdu'r-Razzák, to transcribe into Persian what Dánishwar the Dihkán had told in Pahlaví, and complete the history from the time of Khusrau Parwíz to the end of the reign of Yazdagird. Abú Mansúr instructed an officer of his father's, Su'úd, son of Mansúr Alma'mari, in conjunction with four others—Táj, son of Khurásání of Harát, Yazdándád, son of Shápúr of Sistán, Máhwí, son of Khurshíd of Níshápúr, and Shádán, son of Barzín<sup>1</sup> of Tús—to undertake the task. When the house of the Sámánids came into power they took the greatest interest in the work thus translated, and entrusted it to the poet Dakíkí to put into verse. When he had written one or two thousand couplets he was murdered by his slave, and thus the matter remained till the days of Mahmúd, who encouraged Firdausí to complete the work.

<sup>1</sup> C has Sulaiman son of Núrin—a mistake or misprint. Cf. NT, xxv.

As Baisinghar Khán's preface dates from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, and contains much that is obviously romantic, it is needful to receive the above account with all caution. Even when we have rejected the story of King Jasha and the Abyssinians we are still confronted by a chronological impossibility. Ya'kúb, the son of Lais the coppersmith, died in A.D. 878. Abú Mansúr, who had the work of the Dihkán Dánishwar translated, was a brother of Muhammad, son of Abdu'r-Razzák, and this Muhammad was prince of Tús in the middle of the tenth century,<sup>1</sup> in the days when Firdausí was growing up. Ya'kúb and Abú Mansúr were therefore not contemporaries. Ya'kúb had worked in his father's shop as a youth, he then became a robber-chief, and finally fought his way to what was practically the lordship of Írán. As a native of Sístán, the home of a race whose warlike proclivities were symbolised in the legendary exploits and character of the national hero of Írán, Rustam, or as the founder of a new dynasty, for political reasons he may have taken an interest in the old traditions; but he could not have commissioned Abú Mansúr to do the work for him, and it will be safer to dismiss the notion that he interested himself in the compilation of the Dihkán Dánishwar as highly problematical. On the other hand, the statement in Baisinghar Khán's preface that Abú Mansúr did have a Sháhnáma compiled is confirmed by the learned Abú Raihán Muhammad bin 'Ahmad Albírúní (A.D. 973-1048) in his "Chronology of Ancient Nations."<sup>2</sup> Again we may be somewhat sceptical as to whether a Dihkán named Dánishwar ever existed, but we may concede that the ancient traditions were collected and edited by some learned (dánishwar) Dihkán and indeed by many such.

<sup>1</sup> NT, xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Eng. trans. by Dr. E. Sachau, 119.

The names of the five men employed by Abú Mansúr are all Persian, and the men themselves were in all probability Magi, for none but they would be likely to know Pahlaví in the tenth century. One of the five, Shádán son of Barzín, is mentioned by Firdausí as his authority for the story of the introduction into Persia of Bidpai's Fables in the reign of Núshírwán.<sup>1</sup> Dakíkí, the poet who was first entrusted with the task of versifying the Sháhnáma, was a fire-worshipper, as four lines of his bear witness:—

“Of all of this world's good and ill  
Four things Dakíkí chooseth still—  
Girl's ruby lips, the sound of lyre,  
The blood-red wine, the Faith of Fire.”

Firdausí tells us in his Prelude, § 10, that when on Dakíkí's murder he determined to carry on the work himself he had great difficulty in obtaining the needful materials for the purpose, and was for a while non-plussed by want of them. His statement seems to require some explanation, for, in addition to the considerable Pahlaví literature then extant, the collections made by learned Dihkáns had been translated into Arabic, and were obtainable in numerous histories in that language. Albírúní tells us that the poet Abú-'Alí Muhammad bin 'Ahmad Albalkhí in his Sháhnáma refers to the authors of five such separate histories as his authorities.<sup>2</sup> If, however, we accept Nöldeke's view that Firdausí, in spite of his apparent assertions to the contrary, knew no Pahlaví, was as good as ignorant of Arabic, and used only authorities written in the Persian of his own day,<sup>3</sup> we can understand his difficulty about his materials. He could make no progress till he had obtained a copy of Abú Mansúr's Sháhnáma, perhaps the identical copy used by Dakíkí. The poet in fact seems to speak of his Pahlaví

<sup>1</sup> C, 1746.

<sup>2</sup> Eng. trans., p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> NT, xxiii.

authorities as we might speak of the Hebrew Scriptures, meaning the Old Testament, though we may know them only in the English version. His chief authority was doubtless the *Sháhnáma* of Abú Mansúr, which as we have seen had been translated into modern Persian directly from Pahlaví originals. He also used, as it would seem, translations into modern Persian of Arabic histories themselves translated from Pahlaví originals. Certain passages in the *Sháhnáma*, where Iblís is substituted for Ahriman as the name of the evil principle, may be attributed with confidence to such secondary authorities. Pahlaví originals<sup>1</sup> and Arabic versions have alike disappeared, and the *Sháhnáma* of Firdausí, which alone survives of all the many *Sháhnámas* that once existed, has now become the principal storehouse of Íránian legend, and the leading authority on the subject. The *Sháhnáma* of Firdausí then is a true epic, not a great poet's invention, and the proof is to be found in the nature of his subject-matter and in his own words. He expressly disclaims all originality, telling us that the tale had all been told before, and that all the fruit that had fallen in the garden of knowledge had been already garnered. His share was to mould into song the epos of his native land, scorning no tale, however lowly, and putting the best and purest interpretation on all that he found.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With a few exceptions which will come up for notice in due course.

<sup>2</sup> The *Zandavasta* as we possess it is a Bible in ruins. Of the twenty-one Nasks or Books of which it is said to have consisted only two are extant in their entirety, and these two are precisely those which the Magi would know best—the law of ceremonial observances, and the hymns and litanies most frequently used in public worship. In addition we have fragments of most of the others, and certain summaries, paraphrases, and comments on them in Pahlavi which enable us to form a fair notion of the general contents of the *Zandavasta* as a whole. Thus the *Dinkard* or “Acts of the Faith” contains a summary of nineteen of the twenty-one Nasks, while the *Bundahish* or “Original Creation” preserves for us the account of the creation as it was told in the lost *Dámdád Nask* or “Creatures produced.”

The cosmogony of the poem assumes the earth to be flat and to be supported on the horns of a bull which stood on the back of a fish which swam in the great ocean.<sup>1</sup> The earth was environed by the gigantic Alburz Mountains which reached to heaven.<sup>2</sup> The range was pierced by 180 apertures in the East, and 180 in the West. Through these the sun made its daily entrance and exit, travelling round the outside during the night from the West back to the East.<sup>3</sup> The apertures were intended to account for the changes of place in the rising and the setting of the sun throughout the year. The earth was divided into Seven Climes, the central being Írán, which was surrounded by the other six and was as large as all the rest put together. It was divided from them by vast mountain ranges.<sup>4</sup> The Central Clime was also surrounded by the Eastern equivalent of the Homeric Oceanus or Ocean-stream, for the Indus, Oxus, Aras, Euxine, Bosphorus, Sea of Marmora, Dardanelles, Nile, and Indian Ocean were regarded as a chain of rivers, lakes, gulfs, and seas all in connection with each other.<sup>5</sup> This confusion, especially as regards the Oxus and the Aras, frequently seems to have misled the poet himself. He was a native of Eastern Írán, and naturally supposed that the river so constantly referred to in the poem as the boundary between Írán and Túrán was the Oxus. He shaped matters accordingly, but it can hardly be doubted that the river of his authorities was the Aras.<sup>6</sup> The substitution of Aras for Oxus throws a flood of light upon the wars, campaigns, and political relations recorded in the Sháhnáma, especially during the first and longest portion of the Mythic Period.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lane, "Arabian Nights," i. 19, note 2, and Nicholas, "Le Quatrains de Kheyam," 168, and note.

<sup>2</sup> WPT, i. 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* 22.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* 32-33

<sup>5</sup> WPT, i. 77, and notes.

<sup>6</sup> DZA, i. 4; WPT, i. 80.

The position of the Medes on the Aras explains how the incursions into Ázarbíjân of the Assyrians in early, and of the Arabs in later, times came to be embodied in the story, how we come to have the wars with the Túránians brought so prominently before us, why the arch-enemy Afrásiyáb is recorded to have been taken prisoner in lake Urumiah, and why the writer of the Armenian history who passes under the name of Moses of Chorene couples the two great enemies of the Medes in his account of Persian fable:—"Quid autem tibi sunt voluptati viles ac vanae de Byraspe Astyage fabulae?"<sup>1</sup> Byrasp or Bíwarasp is the Pahlaví term for Zahhák. Astyages was the great Túránian king of Ekbatana and sometime overlord of Cyrus. The vast spaces and regions of the Oxus have always been a difficulty to the student of the Sháhnáma, but substitute the comparatively narrow area between the Caspian and the Euxine and much is explained.<sup>2</sup>

Thus far Firdausí follows the old Íránian cosmogony. In the case of the heavens he rejects it; and its four heavens of the Stars, of the Moon, of the Sun, and of the Endless Lights, become nine in the poem—those of the seven planets, of the angels, and of the throne of God. These heavens were supposed to be crystal-line spheres with independent motions and fitting one inside another like Chinese boxes. The seven planets are the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn.

Firdausí took his imagery chiefly from the ancient cosmogony, or from the natural features of his native land. A Sháh's dominion extends from the Moon to the Fish, or all the Seven Climes obey him. Armies stretch from mountain to mountain, or from sea to sea. The warriors' heads touch the Sun or Saturn. The

<sup>1</sup> *Mosis Chorenensis*, ed. Whiston, 77.

<sup>2</sup> DZA, i. Introd. 1.



warriors themselves are, or are like, mountains, lions, elephants, leopards, and crocodiles, they level the hills with their battle-cries, and pierce with their spears the hearts of flints. Their palaces and castles bar the eagle's flight, rise above the clouds or hold converse with the stars. Troops throng like locusts and ants, and even gnats can find no room to pass them. In battle the field or even the whole world is a sea or stream of gore. A tiger bestrides an elephant and brandishes a crocodile, which being interpreted means that a cavalier waves his sword. Swords too are, or are like, diamonds; while spears turn the earth to a reed-bed. One horse is so keen of sight that it can see an ant's foot on black cloth at night two leagues away. Rapid motion is compared to fire or to its spirit *Ázargashasp*, who is often an equivalent for the lightning, to wind, smoke, or dust, the last being the commonest figure in the poem. The reader, like the poet, will find it ubiquitous, and will not fail to notice in the accounts of marches, battlefields, and single combats, &c., that the sky, sun, moon, &c., are said to grow like indigo or ebony, or to become veiled or to turn dark at noonday, &c. The allusion is to the dust. To say that the air darkened is often merely another way of saying that the dust rose; and both, and kindred expressions, are in constant use to indicate that hosts or individuals have set forth on some expedition, are approaching or engaging in battle, &c. Opposed to the dust—the enemy, is water—the friend. "Where land and water are my treasure is," says one of the *Sháhs* in the poem, and the poet compares the joy of having one's work approved by the wise to that of seeing plenty of water in one's own canal. Consequently it is not the blue but the cloudy sky that delights the Persian eye, and spring, with its clouds and thunder-showers, flowers, and verdure, is the favourite season. "The hand of *Mahmúd*," says the

poet, "is like a cloud in spring." Perpetual spring is the Persian's notion of a perfect climate. A king adorns his rose-garden like spring, *i.e.* he summons all his great men about him and holds a court. The Persian year began with the spring, and the beginning of the New Year was a season of rejoicing. The cheek in joy or health is like the rose, tulip, pomegranate, or Judas-tree blossoms, in fear or passion like those of jasmine or fenugreek, or as colourless as sandarach, the transparent gum of the *Callitris Quadri-valvis*, of which pounce is made. In passion, too, or fear, the body shakes like a willow-tree, the heart and liver become full of blood, the veins throb and the blood itself boils. The narcissus bedews the rose when beauty weeps. Stature is like the cypress, which is also the tree of the burial-ground, the tree of posthumous fame, or like the teak. In old age the straight-stemmed cypress stoops. A youth of promise is a sapling bearing its first fruits. To take any important step is to plant a tree it may be of revenge or of some prudent act of policy, and the fruit of the tree will according to circumstances turn out to be either gems or colocynth. The poet is fond of moralising on life, its transient nature and vicissitudes. His favourite figure for the former is the wayside caravanserai or inn where as pilgrims or travellers we sojourn for a brief space, and then departing yield our room to others; for the latter he appeals to the configuration of his native land—the apparently endless alternation of ascent and descent with which all who have sojourned in those parts are well acquainted—or by a bolder flight describes how a man is raised to Saturn or the Pleiades only to be flung into the ditch or to the Fish—the mythological one referred to above.

Like other poets Firdausi suffered from the constraint of rhyme. When for instance we find "Balkh "

at the end of one hemistich of a couplet, "talkh" is pretty certain to be at the end of the other, and as "talkh" means "bitter" the sense of such passages is apt to be strained. Similarly the changes are rung with great frequency on the words "nīl" (indigo or the Nile), "mīl" (a mile), and "pīl" (an elephant) as verse-endings. The first of these three words is one of the translator's "thorns in the flesh," the poet using it in so many different connections that it is impossible to find a formula of explanation that will cover them all. Relief from an English point of view is sometimes obtained by substituting, with Mohl, "blue sea" for "River Nile," but the best antidote, as Firdausī would say, for the bane of the word is Butler's couplet :—

"For rhyme the rudder is of verses,  
With which, like ships, they steer their courses."

In other words, the poet uses "nīl" for the sound more often than for the sense, and translator and reader alike must take the consequence; but they are at all events exonerated from seeking in such passages for some recondite meaning which Firdausī himself never intended to convey.

## CHAPTER III

### TEXT AND TRANSLATION

UP to the beginning of last century the *Sháhnáma* existed in MS. only. Since then five more or less complete editions have appeared in print:—

i. In 1808 Dr Lumsden undertook to superintend an edition of the poem, one volume of which was published at Calcutta in 1811, but the publication went no further. This edition will be referred to as L.

ii. In 1829 Turner Macan, who must always hold the place of honour among the editors of the poem, after 'devoted labour in collation of MSS., published at Calcutta in four volumes the first and only complete edition, the earlier portion of the text being based on that of L. This edition will be referred to as C.

iii. In 1838 Jules Mohl published the first volume of his most sumptuous edition at the expense of the French government. Six volumes have appeared; but the work was never finished owing to the death of the editor. This edition is based on an independent collation of MSS., and includes a French prose translation as well as the Persian text.<sup>1</sup> This edition will be referred to as P.

iv. In 1850 a complete lithographed edition in one volume folio, edited by Muhammad Mahdí, a native of

<sup>1</sup> It should be added that the French translation has been completed by M. Barbier de Meynard from the text of C, and the whole translation has been published separately by the late Madame Mohl.

Ispahán, was published at Tihrán. The text is a reprint of that of C, with occasional variations, some of which are of value. This edition will be referred to as T.

v. In 1877 J. A. Vullers published the first volume of his edition, and two other volumes have since appeared. The publication of the third volume was interrupted by the lamented death of the editor, but has since been completed from the materials left by him by Samuel Lindauer. Even thus the edition contains only about the first half of the entire poem. This edition is based on the collation of the texts of C and P, with occasional readings from L and T, and other sources. This edition will be referred to as V.

The only complete European translations of the *Sháhnáma* hitherto published are the French one above mentioned and an Italian one in verse by Signor Pizzi. Translations and summaries of portions of the poem have appeared in English and German. The indulgence both of the Persian scholar and of the English reader is asked on behalf of this the first English translation of the poem as a whole in view of the magnitude and difficulty of the undertaking. Our prime object has been to produce a clear and intelligible rendering, and with this end in view we have found it needful to dispense with certain redundances in the original. All these probably may be grouped under the following heads—variant, corrupt, and spurious passages; repetitions, tautologies, and platitudes; and idiomatic and grammatical constructions that proved intractable. Those who are acquainted with the original will readily understand what these omissions amount to; those unacquainted with it may easily find out by comparing our version with that of M. Mohl. Both will, we think, admit that we have left the fable absolutely intact, that

we have scrupulously avoided cutting to the quick and have done nothing to forfeit our claim to call this the first complete English translation of the *Sháhnáma*.

Our version is metrical, partly rhymed and partly unrhymed. The rhymed portion consists of preludes, apologues, sayings of wise men, songs, terminal couplets, passages in which the poet speaks in his own person, and some others that seemed to lend themselves to such treatment. These form a very small part of the whole, and are generally line for line with the original, though couplets or hemistichs may be sometimes inverted for convenience in rendering. We have changed the metre occasionally partly for the sake of variety, partly to suit the character of different passages, and partly for our own refreshment and amusement. The reader should, however, clearly understand that a change of metres implies no corresponding change in the original, of which the metre is the same throughout.

The unrhymed portion, which forms the bulk of the translation, and does not aspire to the dignity of being called blank verse, is more condensed than the rhymed, though the proportion of English to Persian is constantly varying; sometimes a whole couplet in the original is best expressed by a single line in the translation; sometimes a line and a half, two lines or more in the translation go to the couplet in the original. The average may be roughly stated as three English lines to two Persian couplets. The result of these various economies is that our translation is some twenty-five per cent. shorter than otherwise it would have been.

We have followed the text of V as far as it goes, silently incorporating with it all the changes and additions made by the editor himself in his notes and in his *Apparatus Criticus* at the end of his first

volume, subject of course to the heads of omissions stated above and to the occasional adoption of readings from other texts. These, we hope, we have invariably noted.

When the text of V failed us we fell back upon that of C, as to which we reserve any remarks that we may find it necessary to make till the volume of our translation is reached in which the change of text occurs.

The attention of the reader is called to the following points:—

1. It is hoped that the Introduction may prove sufficient for those who wish to read the *Sháhnáma* in its English dress but have no previous acquaintance with the subject. They will find notes prefixed to the principal divisions of the poem, but it has been thought desirable to avoid footnotes, as far as possible, to the translation itself.

2. The passages that need the most constant elucidation are those of a descriptive, figurative, or metaphorical character. An attempt has been made to explain the principal of these once for all in the previous chapter. Such passages often might have been made self-explanatory by a sufficient sacrifice of the imagery of the original. It has seemed to us, however, better to say that the Sháh dropped the ball into the cup<sup>1</sup> or bestowed the kettledrums upon some one, than that the Sháh gave the signal for the host to move or appointed some one commander-in-chief.

3. The structure of the Persian language is very loose grammatically. One form, for instance, stands for he, she, and it. For the sake of clearness we have often substituted the noun for the pronoun. Of

<sup>1</sup> The cup was attached to the side of the elephant on which the Sháh or commander-in-chief rode. Both cup and ball were made of what we should call bell-metal.

course this involves a certain amount of interpretation, and differences of opinion in some cases legitimately may exist as to who or what the person or thing referred to may be. On the other hand, we often find a noun where in English we should use a pronoun, and we have constantly made the substitution in passages where no doubt can arise in the reader's mind. Again the couplet-form in which the poem is written has a tendency to break it up into a succession of short sentences, and this, added to the above-mentioned use of the noun where we should naturally use the pronoun and to the paucity of connecting particles, frequently makes the transition from sentence to sentence somewhat abrupt and the line of thought difficult to follow. Often we have carried on sentences by the addition of connecting particles which are not in the original.

4. We desire to make some explanations with regard to certain important words in the original.

*Bâj* and *Zamzam*. By these terms is known a certain practice of Zoroastrians which may be paraphrased in English as "taking prayer inwardly." Before eating, washing, &c., it is customary to mutter the beginning of some sacred formula, to carry through the operation in complete silence, and then to utter the rest of the formula aloud.<sup>1</sup> We have employed such expressions as "muttering" or "muttered prayer" to describe the practice. It is sometimes used as a pretext for obtaining a few moments' private conversation.

*Barsam*. This was formerly a bundle of twigs, but now of metal wires varying in number according to circumstances, held in the hand, during the performance of certain religious rites of the Zoroastrians.<sup>2</sup> The practice is clearly referred to in Ezekiel viii. 16, 17. We translate "*Barsam*" by "the sacred twigs."

<sup>1</sup> WPT, ii. 134.

<sup>2</sup> HEP, 397, &c.



*Dakhma*. Firdausí does not use this word in its proper sense—that in which it is still used by the Parsís at the present day—but in that of mausoleum, charnel, or charnel-house, and we have so translated it.<sup>1</sup>

*Dihkán*. The general sense of this word is that of countryman as distinguished from townsman. Owing, however, to the fact that the rural class in Írán as elsewhere were the chief repositories of the traditions and folklore of their native land, which were handed down orally and recited at local gatherings by those best qualified for the task, the word came to have the secondary meaning of bard or minstrel, and we have rendered it according to its first or secondary meaning as the sense of the passage required.

*Dínár* and *Diram*. Of these the *dínár* was a gold and the *diram* a silver coin. The Attic drachma was made the basis of his monetary system by Alexander the Great, and Persia possessed no native gold coinage till more than five centuries later. It then obtained one by accident. By the terms of peace between Árdawán (Artabanus), the last Parthian monarch, and the Emperor Macrinus, after the great battle of Nisibis in A.D. 217, the latter agreed to pay to the former an indemnity of more than a million and a half of our money. The sum seems to have been chiefly paid in aurei. Consequently when Ardshír Pápakán (Artaxerxes) became the first Sháh of the new native Persian (Sásánian) dynasty in A.D. 226 he found the country flooded with two distinct coinages with no recognised relation between them except the rough and ready one of commerce. He seems to have left matters to settle themselves, and in his own coinage followed the type of the aureus for his gold coins and that of the drachma for his silver.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> A full account of the *Dakhma* in the proper sense of the word will be found in DFKHP, i. 192-213.

<sup>2</sup> RSM, 69.

expression "dínárs and dirams" is one frequently met with in the poem, and as it is rather an inconvenient one metrically we have substituted the older form "drachm" for "diram."

*Dív.* We retain this word as in the original. When spelt with a capital it is to be regarded as equivalent to Áhriman or Iblís, except in the collocations "Black Dív" and "White Dív." When spelt with a small letter it may mean either a demon or a member of some savage or outlandish tribe.<sup>1</sup>

*Farr.* The "farr" was regarded as the special divine endowment of the Íránian race—the favoured people of Urmuzd—and as an object of envy or ambition to the neighbouring peoples. It was regarded in the Zandavasta as something material, that could be sought, seized, and carried off, and even in the Sháhnáma we find a few occasions when it assumes a visible form. Each of the three primitive castes into which the Íránians were divided had its own special "farr," while the Sháh united all three in his own person, and the possession of the threefold "farr" constituted his title to the throne. There is an instance in the present volume where after the death of a Sháh his two sons are both passed over in the succession as not being possessed of the "farr." Firdausí, it should be noted, gives himself great latitude in the use of this and many other expressions, but wherever the word appears to be used in its correct sense we render it by "Grace" or "Glory."

- *Farsang.* The farsang is a measure of length, and we have always translated it as "league," although it is about three-quarters of a mile longer than our English league.

*Khil'at.* The word properly means a robe bestowed by a ruler from his own wardrobe on some one as a sign of special favour. As it was accompanied by

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Chinese expression "foreign devils."

other gifts it came to mean gifts generally when bestowed by the ruler on a subject. We usually translate the word as "robe of honour."

*Maidán.* This word properly means a level piece of ground attached to palaces or cities and used for purposes of exercise or pastime. Hence it comes to mean any level stretch of country, the space between two hostile hosts on which opposing champions would ride out and contend, a battlefield, park, &c. We have adopted various translations of the word to express these various meanings.

*Múbid.* The word properly means a chief priest of the Magi, but is often merely equivalent to "sage," and is sometimes used of priests of other religious denominations. When used in its proper sense we translate it by "archmage" or "archimage," when used generally by "priest." The expression "múbid-i múbi-dán," i.e. chief of the múbids, we always translate by "high priest."

*Pahlaví* and *Pahlaván.* The first of these two words has been already explained.<sup>1</sup> We render it by such phrases as "olden tongue," &c. The second is applied by Firdausí to all his chief Íránian characters other than the Sháhs, for the Pahlaván was essentially a subject. The chief Pahlaván was the protagonist or champion of the race for the time being but not necessarily commander-in-chief. Sometimes he was kept in reserve as a last resort when matters were going very badly. The office was hereditary in the heroic family of Garshásp, and Rustam; with whom its mythic glory becomes extinct, was its chief exponent. We translate by "paladin."

*Parí.* It is hard to realise that this word, which in Arab lips would become "Fari," is not connected with "fairy," but it appears that for the etymology of the latter we must go to the Latin "Fata." In meaning,

<sup>1</sup> p. 64.

however, our "fairy" and "fay" are the nearest English equivalents, and we have so rendered the word.

*Saráparda*.—We translate this word by "camp enclosure." The *saráparda* was a screen of canvas or other material encircling an encampment.

5. Some of the chief characters in the poem are known in the original by several titles. *Zál*, the father of *Rustam*, is also called *Zál-i-Zar*, *Dastán-i-Zand*, *Dastán-i-Sám*, or simply *Dastán*; *Rustam* himself is frequently referred to as the son of *Zál*, the Elephant-bodied, the Matchless, &c., and there are other instances of duplicate names. To follow the original in this respect would involve the English reader in hopeless confusion, and we have therefore in such cases selected one name for a character and kept to it, or if we employ a duplicate we only do it in such a context that no doubt is possible as to the identity of the person referred to.

Again, the poet uses the word *Sháh* in a very wide connection, but we employ it only when one of the forty-nine rulers of *Írán* or the *Sultán Maḥmúd* is referred to. Where the word is applied to others than the above we translate it by king or monarch, &c. We have carried out the same principle in other cases where it seemed to us that obscurity might arise. The above are merely given as instances.

6. With regard to the spelling of proper names we have followed the original with a few exceptions. We have kept *Cæsar* instead of *Kaisar*, *Rúman* instead of *Rúmí*, *Indian* instead of *Hindí*, and there may be a few more instances.<sup>1</sup>

For *Khákán* we invariably substitute the shorter form *Khán*, as the expression "the *Khákán* of *Chín*" is inconvenient metrically.

<sup>1</sup> In the transliteration of proper names the best rule seems to be to retain the thoroughly familiar in their familiar forms. For the English reader "*Cæsar* said" is better than "*Kaisar* said," or, more correctly, "*Qaiṣar* said."

In the Persian the letter *k* in the word *Kábul* for instance is a different letter from that beginning the name of the hero *Káran*, which in accord to present usage should be spelt *Qáran*. Similarly the *z* in the word *Zábul* is a different letter from that in *Ázargashasp*, but we thought that on the whole it was better not to make such distinctions.

7. In cases in which it seemed to us that ambiguity might arise we have spelt words used metaphorically with a capital letter.

8. Those who desire to compare our translation with the original will find on the pages of the former references to the corresponding pages of the latter. For instance, V. 233 against a line indicates the beginning of that page in Vullers' edition of the text.

9. A note on pronunciation will be found immediately preceding the translation in each volume.

10. The headings of the reigns, parts, and sections are reprinted at the end of the volume to serve as a Table of Contents.

11. A list of some previous translations, the old Persian calendar, some genealogical tables, and a note on abbreviations are appended.

12. Finally we have to ask our readers not to judge, and in all probability condemn, this work on the strength of its first few pages. The Prelude and the initial reigns are most difficult to make anything of in a translation. This is not wholly our own fault. The poet himself, as readers of the original will bear witness, labours heavily, embarrassed perhaps by the character of his subject-matter. "The poem," says Professor Nöldeke, "does not obtain real life till the reign of Jamshíd."<sup>1</sup> In spite of the heroic tale of *Káwa* the smith, and the pathetic misadventure of *Íraj*, and much else that is both curious and interest-

<sup>1</sup> NIN, 37.

ing, we should be inclined to put the beginning of the "real life" later still. At all events the reader will find the poem growing in interest reign by reign till poet and poem appear at their best in the charming tale which fills for us the reign of Minúchihr.

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## PREVIOUS TRANSLATORS OF THE SHÁHNÁMA

### FRENCH.

MOHL, already referred to, p. 76.

### ITALIAN.

PIZZI, Firdusi. *Il Libro dei Rei*. Vols. i.-viii. Torino, 1886-1888. [This is a complete metrical translation with an elaborate Introduction.]

### GERMAN.

GÖRRES, *Das Heldenbuch von Iran aus den Schah Nameh des Firdusi*. Berlin, 1820. [The translation extends from the beginning of the history to the death of Rustam. It has a long and strange Introduction and a quaint map of the scene of the Sháhnáma.]

SCHACK, *Heldensagen von Firdausi*. Berlin, 1865. [The translation extends from Farídún to the death of Rustam.]

RUCKERT, *Firdosi's Königsbuch*. Sage i.-xxvi. Berlin, 1890-1895. [This extends as far as Rustam and Suhráb.]

### ENGLISH.

JONES, *Commentarii poëseos Asiaticae*. London, 1774. [In this work some passages from the Sháhnáma are translated for the first time into an European language.]

CHAMPION, *The Poems of Ferdosi*. Calcutta, 1785. [The translation extends from the beginning of the history to the birth of Rustam.]

ATKINSON, *Sooráb*. Calcutta, 1814. *The Sháh Námeah translated and abridged in prose and verse*. London, 1832. [This work gives a summary of the history, with short passages of translation interspersed, up to the death of Sikandar (Alexander the Great).]

WESTON, *Episodes of the Schah-nameh of Ferdosee*. 1815.

ROBERTSON, *Roostum Zeboolah and Sohrab*. 1829.

## THE CALENDAR

THE old Persian year was solar and began at the vernal equinox. It consisted of 365 days divided into 12 months of 30 days each, the five extra days being added after the completion of the twelfth month to fill up the time till the sun should re-enter Aries, and spring and the new year begin on the 21st of March. Each day of the month had its special genius presiding over it, after whom it was named, thus:—

Day 1. Urmuzd.	Day 16. Mihr.
„ 2. Bahman.	„ 17. Surúsh.
„ 3. Ardibihisht.	„ 18. Rashn.
„ 4. Sharívar.	„ 19. Farvardín.
„ 5. Sapandármad.	„ 20. Bahrám.
„ 6. Khurdád.	„ 21. Rám.
„ 7. Murdád.	„ 22. Bád.
„ 8. Dai pa Ádar.	„ 23. Dai pa Dín.
„ 9. Ádar.	„ 24. Dín.
„ 10. Ábán.	„ 25. Ard.
„ 11. Khurshíd.	„ 26. Áshtád.
„ 12. Máh.	„ 27. Ásmán.
„ 13. Tír.	„ 28. Zamíyád.
„ 14. Gúsh.	„ 29. Máhraspand.
„ 15. Dai pa Mihr.	„ 30. Anairán.

Of these thirty génii twelve were chosen to give their names to the months as well, thus:—

PRING	{ Farvardín . . .	March 21	to April 19.
	{ Ardibihisht . . .	April 20	„ May 19.
	{ Khurdád . . .	May 20	„ June 18.
SUMMER	{ Tír . . .	June 19	„ July 18.
	{ Murdád . . .	July 19	„ August 17.
	{ Sharívar . . .	August 18	„ September 16.



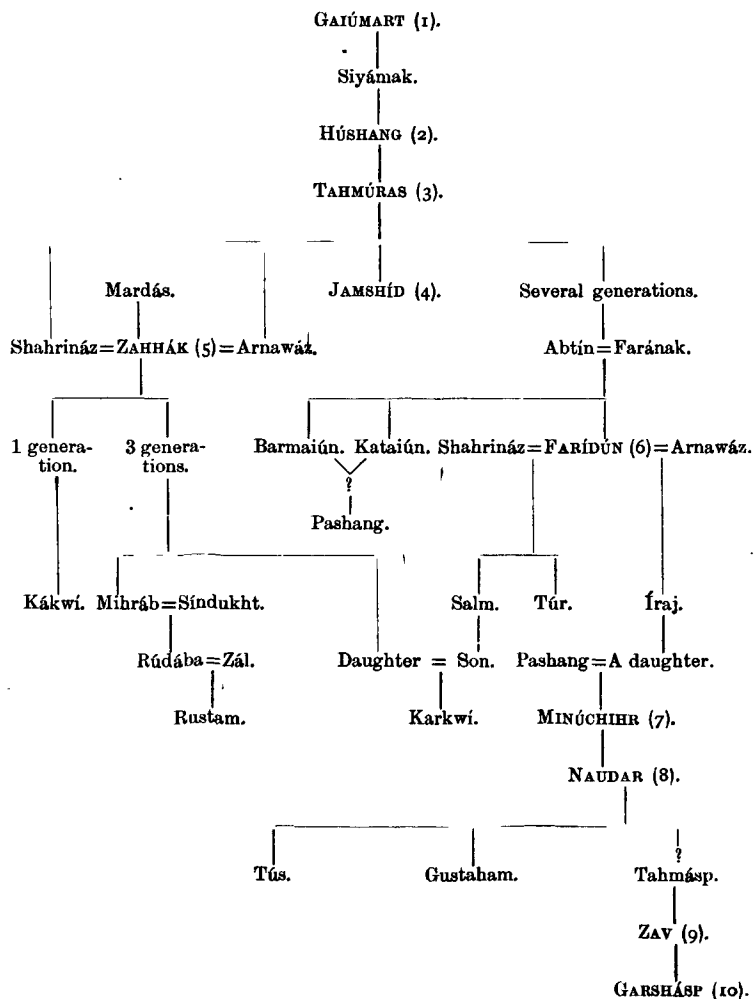
AUTUMN	{	Mihr . . . . .	September 17 to October 16.
		Ábán . . . . .	October 17 „ November 15.
		Ádar . . . . .	November 16 „ December 15.
WINTER	{	Dín . . . . .	December 16 „ January 14.
		Bahman . . . . .	January 15 „ February 13.
		Sapandármad . . .	February 14 „ March 15.

Thus the day Sapandármad of the month Khurdád would be equivalent to May 24th, and the day Khurdád of the month Sapandármad to February 19th.

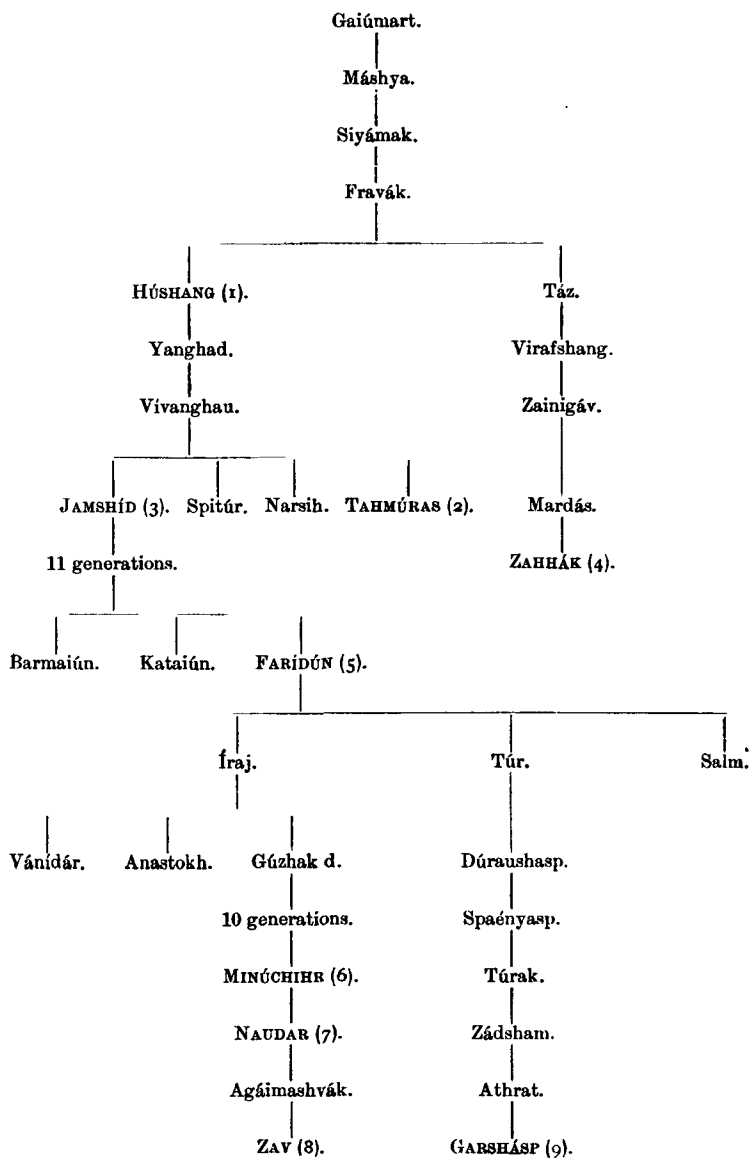
Time was reckoned by days and nights, not by nights and days as among the Jews and Muhammadans.

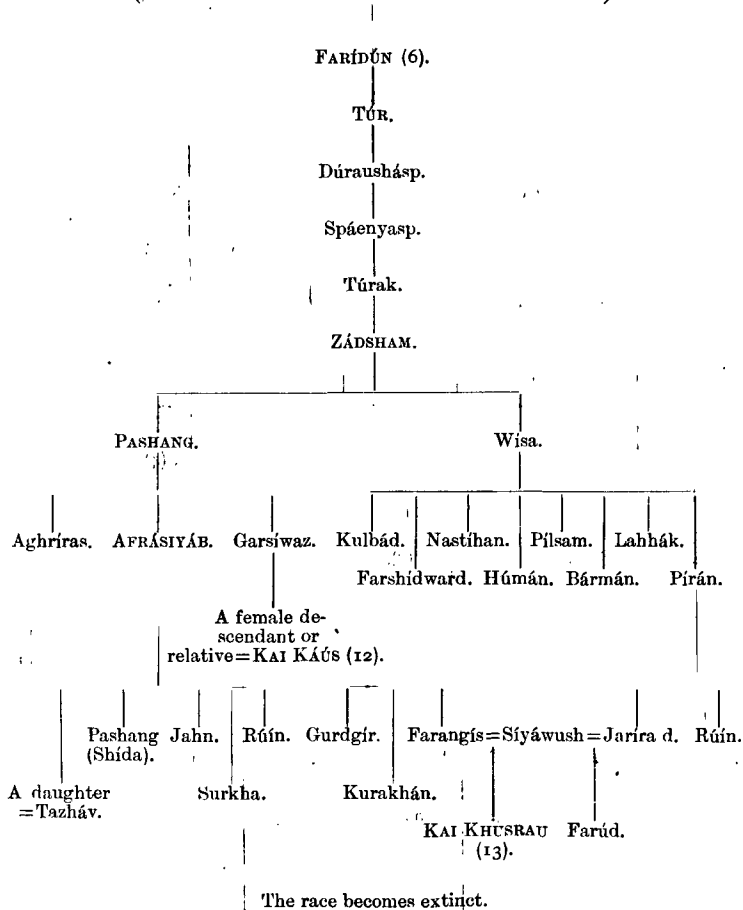
The twenty-four hours of the day and night were divided into eight watches of three hours each.

# GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE PISHDÁDIANS (ACCORDING TO THE SHÁHNÁMA.)



GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE PISHDÁDIANS.  
(ACCORDING TO THE BUNDAHISH.)





## ABBREVIATIONS

- C.—Macan's edition of the *Sháhnáma*.  
 L.—Lumsden's do.  
 P.—Mohl's do.  
 T.—Tihrán do.  
 V.—Vullers' do.
- BAN. A plain and literal translation of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, now entitled the Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night, &c. By Richard F. Burton.
- BCM. The *Chahár Maqála* ("Four Discourses") of Nidhámí-i-'Arúdí-i-Samarqandí. Translated into English by Edward G. Browne, M.A., M.B.
- DEI. J. Darmesteter, *Études Iraniennes*.
- DFKHP. History of the Parsis. By Dosabhai Framji Karaka, C.S.I.
- DHA. The History of Antiquity. From the German of Professor Max Duncker. By the late Evelyn Abbott, M.A.
- DZA. Professor Darmesteter's Trans. of the *Zandavasta* in the Sacred Books of the East. Reference to Parts<sup>1</sup> and pages.
- EP. Eastern Persia, an Account of the Journeys of the Persian Boundary Commission, 1870-71-72.
- EHI. The History of India as told by its own Historians. By Sir H. M. Elliot, K.C.B.
- GDF. The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. By Edward Gibbon, Esq. With Notes by Dean Milman and M. Guizot. Edited, with additional Notes, by William Smith, LL.D.
- GHP. *Histoire des Perses* par le Comte de Gobineau.

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## NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION

*á* as in "water." <sup>1</sup>

*í* as in "pique."

*ú* as in "rude."

*a* as in "servant."

*i* as in "sin."

*u* as *oo* in "foot."

*ai* as *i* in "time."

*au* as *ou* in "cloud."

*g* is always hard as in "give."

*kh* as *ch* in the German "buch."

*zh* as *z* in "azure."

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<sup>1</sup> Therefore "Sám," the name of the father of Zál, should be pronounced "Saum."

# GENERAL LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

C.—Macan's edition of the Sháhnáma	
L.—Lumsden's	Dó.
P.—Mohl's	do.
T.—Tihrán	do.
V.—Vullers'	dc.

- AM. The Voiage and Travayle of Sir John Maundeville, Knight  
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M.A.
- BLRE. History of the Lower Roman Empire. By J. B. Bury.
- BPB. Photius: Bibliotheca. Ex Recensione Immanuelis Bek-  
keri.
- CIG. Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum.
- CTC. Theophanis Chronographia. Ex Recensione Ioannis  
Classeni.
- DAA. Arriani Anabasis ... F. Dübner.
- DAI. Arriani Indica ... F. Dübner.
- DEI. J. Darmesteter, Études Iraniennes.



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# GENERAL INDEX

*This Index and the General Table of Contents in this volume are complementary. References to the latter are in Italics.*

## A

- AAISHMA DAËVA, demon, iii., 272  
=Asmodeus probably, iii,  
272
- Ábán, genius, iii, 287, 328
- 'Abbás, Arab chief, attacks Hur-  
muzd, viii, 93
- 'Abbásid, 'Abbásids, Muhamma-  
dan dynasty, vi, 327  
rise of, i, 13  
fall of, i, 14
- Abbreviations, General List of,  
ix, 135
- Abdaas, bishop, vi, 372
- Abraham, patriarch, vi, 65
- Abtín (Áptya, Áthwya), mythi-  
cal Iránian hero, husband  
of Farának and father of  
Faridún, ix, 53, 103  
legend of, i, 145  
Zahhák slays, i, 151, 153  
Faridún avenges, i, 170  
mythological origin of, i,  
171, 172, 174
- Abú-'Alí Muhammad, Persian  
poet, Sháhnáma of, i, 69
- Abú Bakr, the first Khalífa  
(A.D. 632-4), i, 12, ix, 76  
begins war with Persian  
Empire, ix, 66
- Abú Dulaf, friend of Firdausí, i,  
35  
assists Firdausí, i, 35  
reciter of the Sháhnáma,  
i, 39
- Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl bin Ahmad,  
minister of Mahmúd and  
perhaps a patron of Fir-  
dausí, i, 30, 100, iv, 141  
account of, i, 36  
disgrace of, may have af-  
fected Firdausí, i, 37
- Abú'l Fazl, minister under the  
Sámánids, father of Abú  
'Alí al Bal'amí who trans-  
lated Tabarí, vii, 430  
patron of Rúdagí, vii, 383
- Abú'l Kásim (Firdausí, *q.v.*), i,  
24, 38, 99, 112, iv, 140,  
v, 89, 119, vi, 20, 207,  
viii, 28
- Abú'l Kásim of Gurgán, shaikh,  
iii, 191  
dream of, about Firdausí, iii,  
191
- Abú' Muzaffar. *See* Nasr.
- Abú Mansúr bin Abdu'r Razzák,  
prince of Tús, i, 67 *seq.*,  
vi, 16
- Sháhnáma of, vi, 16  
probably compiled by  
Magi for, i, 69, viii, 71,  
73  
importance of, for Fir-  
dausí, viii, 73.
- Abú Mansúr bin Muhammad, son  
of above (?), 139  
patron of Firdausí, i, 29, 110  
murdered, i, 29, 111  
praise of, i, 110  
advice of, to Firdausí, i,  
111

- Abú Raihán Muhammad. *See* Albírúní.
- Abú Tálib, uncle of Muhammad, i, 12
- Abú 'Ubaida, Arab general, ix, 66  
supersedes Khálid in Syria, ix, 66
- Abú 'Uhaida, Arab general, ix, 67  
made commander in Persian campaign, ix, 67  
slain, ix, 67
- Accession of a Sháh, ceremony at, vi, 409
- Achaemenid, Achaemenids, the, first historical Persian dynasty, i, 64, v, 10, 281, vi, 194, 197, 198
- Achshunwar. *See* Akhshunwar.
- 'Ád, father of Shaddád, *q.v.*  
Arab tribe, viii, 276
- 'Adan, seaport and territory in southern Arabia, vi, 386
- Ádar. *See* Ázar.
- Ádarbád, son of Mahraspand, Zoroastrian Saint, v, 16  
*note*  
ordeal of, v, 16 *note*
- Aden. *See* 'Adan.
- Adonis, iv, 315
- Ægean sea, vi, 204
- Afrásiyáb, son of Pashang, ruler of Túrán and one of the arch-enemies of Írán, 142-153, i, 42, 55, 72, ii, 11, 13, 14, 16 *seq.*, 20, 79, 81, 98 *seq.*, 118, 127, 149, 184, 189, 242 *seq.*, 257 *seq.*, 283, 286, 288, 322 *seq.*, 335, 347 *seq.*, 360 *seq.*, 369, 373, 380, 381, 386, 392 *seq.*, 401 *seq.*, iii, 8, 12, 13, 15, 23, 26, 27, 29, 40, 42, 47, 73, 76 *seq.*, 100, 108, 123, 134, 136, 143, 146, 152, 153, 164, 165, 176, 183, 185, 193, 200 *seq.*, 207 *seq.*, 211, 213, 218, 223, 228, 241, 260 *seq.*, 268, 271, 277 *seq.*, 285, 295, 298, 300, 320, 333, 337, 339, 346
- Afrásiyáb—*cont.*  
*seq.*, iv, 7, 8, 17, 19 *seq.*, 25, 29, 46, 56, 58 *seq.*, 65, 66, 70, 75, *seq.*, 83, 89, 93, 94, 96, 103, 108, 110, 113, 117, 128, 129, 145, 146, 150 *seq.*, 192 *seq.*, 235, 252, 253, 273, 287, 289, 294 v, 12, 13, 21, 44, 62, 176, 203, 208, vi, 15, 79, 177, 240 and *note*, vii, 330, 335, 337, 359, viii, 242, 300, 349, ix, 25, 103  
one of the Zoroastrian triad of evil, i, 59 and *note*  
mythological origin of, i, 337  
first mention of, in Sháh-náma, i, 342  
advocates war with Naudar, i, 343  
bidden by Pashang to invade Írán, i, 343  
sends Shamásás and Khazarwán to invade Sístán, i, 345  
marches to Dahistán, i, 346  
writes to Pashang, i, 346  
encourages Bármán to challenge the Íránians to single combat, i, 347  
rewards Bármán, i, 348  
fights with Naudar, i, 348 and *seq.*  
encounters Káran, i, 350  
victorious, i, 350, 352  
beleaguers Naudar in Dahistán, i, 353  
sends Kurúkhán to attack Párs, i, 353  
takes Naudar and other chiefs prisoners, i, 355  
hears of the death of Bármán and bids Wisa pursue Káran, i, 356  
hears of the Turkman defeats, i, 362  
sends for, and slays, Naudar, i, 362  
spares the other captives at Ighríras' request, i, 363

Afrásiyáb, imprisons the captives at Sarí, i, 363  
 advances to Rai, i, 363  
 wroth with, and slays, Igh-ríras, i, 367  
 fights with Zál, i, 368  
 Pashang's wrath with, i, 374  
 invades Írán, i, 374 *seq.*, 381  
 sends Kulún to intercept Rustam, i, 382  
 fights with Arabs for Írán and takes it, ii, 92  
 king of Túrán and Chín, ii, 99  
 expelled from Írán by Kai Káuś and Rustam, ii, 101  
 fights with the Seven Warriors, ii., 111 *seq.*  
 nearly taken prisoner by Rustam, ii, 14, 116, 354, iii, 242, 250 and *note*  
 plot of, against Suhráb and Rustam, ii, 129  
 gifts of, to Suhráb, ii, 130  
 identical with Astyages in legend, ii, 191  
 referred to, ii, 322, 347, 394, iii, 206, iv, 145, 150, 194  
 invades Írán, ii, 224 *seq.*  
 dream of, ii, 232, 243, 297, iv, 170, 267  
 determines to sue for peace and sends hostages, ii, 235 *seq.*  
 receives Zanga and consults Pírán, ii, 253 *seq.*  
 sends Pírán to welcome Siyáwush, ii, 258  
 plays at polo with Siyáwush, ii, 264  
 marries Farangís to Siyáwush, ii, 275  
 recalls Siyáwush, from Gang-dizh, ii, 285  
 sends Garsíwaz to Siyáwushgird, ii, 289  
 deceived by Garsíwaz respecting Siyáwush, ii, 296 *seq.*

Afrásiyáb, sends Garsíwaz to summon Siyáwush and Farangís to court, ii, 300 *seq.*  
 attacks, takes, and has Siyáwush executed, ii, 314 *seq.*  
 appealed to by Farangís, ii, 317  
 ill-treatment of Farangís by, ii, 320, 322  
 referred to, iv, 204  
 appeal of Pírán to, ii, 324  
 referred to, iv, 205  
 spares Farangís, ii, 325, and her son Kai Khusráu, ii, 327  
 interview of, with Kai Khusráu, ii, 332  
 referred to, iv., 205  
 sends Surkha against the Iránians, ii, 344  
 marches to avenge Surkha, ii, 348  
 fights with Tús, ii, 353  
 rescue of, from Rustam by Húmán, ii, 354  
 crosses the sea of Chín, ii, 356  
 consults Pírán about Kai Khusráu, ii, 356  
 returns, ii, 362  
 vengeance of, on Írán, ii, 363  
 pursues Kai Khusráu, ii, 388 *seq.*  
 disgraces Pírán, ii, 390  
 turns back at the Jílún, ii, 394  
 Kai Khusráu's oath to take vengeance on, iii., 21  
 hears of the approach of the Iránian host, iii, 71  
 bids Pírán gather troops, iii, 71, 79  
 numbers the host, iii, 79  
 loss of kindred of, in battle, iii, 94  
 rewards Pírán, iii, 106  
 reinforces Pírán, iii, 118

Afrásiyáb, announces to his chiefs the defeat of his host, iii, 242  
 exhorted by his host to continue the war, iii, 243, 249  
 makes his preparations, iii, 243, 250  
 sends Farghár to spy on Rustam, iii, 250  
 consults with Shída, iii, 250  
 describes Rustam, iii, 251  
 receives Farghár's report, iii, 253  
 consults with Pírán, iii, 253  
 bids Pírán continue the war, iii, 254  
 sends Shída to summon Púládward, iii, 255  
 consults Púládward, iii, 256  
 interferes in the fight between Rustam and Púládward, iii, 263  
 withdraws to Chín and Máchín, iii, 265  
 goes in pursuit of Rustam and is defeated, iii, 280  
 hears of the case of Bízhan and Manízha, iii, 301  
 consults Kurákhán, iii, 301  
 sends Garsiwaz to search Manízha's palace, iii, 301  
 sentences Bízhan to death, iii, 304  
 respites Bízhan, iii, 308  
 imprisons Bízhan, iii, 309  
 disgraces Manízha, iii, 309  
 escapes from Rustam, iii, 348  
 bids Pírán prepare for war, iii, 349  
 arrays the host against Rustam, iii, 350  
 flees from Rustam, iii, 352  
 goes to Khallukh, iv, 10  
 addresses his nobles, iv, 10  
 sends Shída to Kharazm, iv, 11.  
 Pírán against Írán, iv, 11  
 reinforcements and bids him break off negotiations with Gíw, iv, 20

Afrásiyáb, receives tidings from Pírán, iv, 77  
 =king of Gang, iv, 134  
 Kai Khusrau's great war with, 152, iv, 135 *seq.*  
 encamped at Baigand (Kunduz), iv, 151  
 hears ill tidings of Pírán and of the host, iv, 151  
 distress of, iv, 152  
 swears to be avenged on Kai Khusrau, iv, 152  
 hears of the advance of Kai Khusrau, iv, 153  
 harangues and equips his host, iv, 153  
 patrols the Jihún with boats, iv, 153  
 holds a council, summons Kurákhán, and crosses the Jihún, iv, 154  
 sends Kurákhán with half the host to Bukhára, iv, 154  
 marches to Ámwí, iv, 154  
 encamps in Gílán, iv, 155  
 arrays his host, iv, 155  
 takes his post at the centre, iv, 155  
 gives Shída command of the left wing, iv, 155  
 sends Jahn to guard Shída's rear, iv, 155  
 gives a grandson command of the right wing, iv, 156  
 commands to Gurdgír, Nastúh, Ighrírás, and Garsiwaz, iv, 156  
 proposes to invade Nímruz, iv, 156  
 reviews the host and prepares to encounter Kai Khusrau, iv, 158  
 urged by Shída not to delay the attack, iv, 159  
 reply of, iv, 160  
 wishes to meet Kai Khusrau in single combat, iv, 161  
 sends Shída on an embassy to Kai Khusrau, iv, 161

- Afrásiyáb, hears of Shída's death, iv, 176  
 grief of, iv, 176  
 commands in person against Kai Khusrau, iv, 179  
 sends Jahn to the left, iv, 180  
 reinforced by Garsíwaz, iv, 181  
 forced by Garsíwaz and Jahn to quit the field, iv, 182  
 returns to camp, iv, 183  
 abandons his camp and recrosses the Jíhún, iv, 184  
 joins forces with Kurákhán, iv, 186  
 stays at Bukhárá, iv, 186  
 withdraws to Gang-bihisht, iv, 187  
 reinforced by Kákula, iv, 188  
 sends troops to Chách, iv, 188  
   under Tawurg desertward, iv, 188  
 marches to meet Kai Khusrau, iv, 190  
 commands the centre, iv, 190  
 hears of Kurákhán's defeat and return, iv, 193  
 hears that Rustam is advancing, iv, 194  
 fails in attempt to surprise Rustam and withdraws to Gang-bihisht, iv, 194, *seq.*  
 asks aid from the Faghfúr, iv, 196  
 prepares Gang-bihisht for a siege, iv, 197  
 besieged in Gang-bihisht, iv, 198, 208 *seq.*  
 offers terms of peace to Kai Khusrau, iv, 203  
 rallies his troops at the storming of Gang-bihisht, iv, 209  
 escapes, iv, 211  
 gets possession of the treasures of Pírán, iv, 219
- Afrásiyáb, arrays his host to fight with Kai Khusrau, iv, 220  
 offers Kai Khusrau peace or single combat, iv, 221  
 fights a general engagement against Kai Khusrau, iv, 223, 226  
 defeated and escapes by flight, iv, 227  
 army, of, surrenders to Kai Khusrau, iv, 228  
 takes refuge at Gang-dizh, iv, 230  
 captive kindred of, sent to Kai Káuś by Kai Khusrau, iv, 232  
 Kai Káuś on, iv, 237  
 Khusrau's inquiries concerning, iv, 247  
 hears of Kai Khusrau's approach and quits Gang-dizh, iv, 248  
 searched for by Kai Khusrau, iv, 248  
 fears of the Írániāns concerning, iv, 249  
 Kai Khusrau takes counsel with Kai Káuś about, iv, 258  
 wanderings and wretched plight of, iv, 259  
 takes refuge in a cave near Barda', iv, 259  
 lament of, overheard by Húm, iv, 260  
 capture of, by Húm, iv, 261  
   Darmesteter on, iv, 136  
 pitied and unbound by Húm, iv, 262  
 escapes into lake Urumiah, iv, 262 and *note*  
 attracted by the voice of Garsíwaz, iv, 265  
 holds converse with Garsíwaz, iv, 266  
 recapture of, by Húm, iv, 266  
 slain by Kai Khusrau, iv, 268



- Afrásiyáb, daughter of = Fa-  
iangís, iv, 304  
Khán of Chín descended  
from, vii, 334  
hoard of, viii, 148, 406  
Africa, vi, 30  
Áfrigh, king of Khírazm, ii, 190  
'Airft, genie, i, 42  
Agani, Sargon I. of, v, 293  
Age, old, Firdausí's lament over  
his, ii, 336  
Golden. *See* Golden.  
Aghraératha (Ighrírás, *q.v.*), iv,  
137  
Aghrérad (Ighrírás. *q.v.*), i, 338  
Aghrírás. *See* Ighrírás.  
Agni, Vedic personification of  
fire, ii, 25  
Ahdnámak (Andarznámak), Pah-  
laví treatise, vi, 257  
Ahmad, son of Ismá'íl, Sámánid,  
vii, 383  
Almad, son of Sahl, lord of Marv,  
v, 260, 261  
Ahmad, Fazl son of. *See* Ábú'l  
'Abbás Fazl.  
Ahmad Hasan Maimandí, minis-  
ter of Mahmúd, i, 32, 39,  
45  
Ahmad ibn Muhammad, patron  
of Firdausí, i, 29  
Ahran, Rúman chief, 154, iv,  
342 *seq.*, 353  
bidden by Caesar to slay the  
dragon of Mount Sakla,  
iv, 342  
takes counsel with Mírín,  
iv, 342  
referred by Mírín to Hishwí,  
iv, 344  
Ahran, required by Gushtásp to  
furnish him with arms, iv,  
345  
goes with Gushtásp and  
Hishwí to Mount Sakla,  
iv, 346  
Hishwí and, welcome Gush-  
tásp on his return, iv,  
347  
gives gifts to Gushtásp, iv,  
347  
Ahran, has the dead dragon con-  
veyed to Caesar's court,  
iv, 348  
marries Caesar's third  
daughter, iv, 348  
Mírín and, display their  
accomplishment on the  
riding-ground, iv, 349  
Caesar's wrath with Mírín  
and, iv, 351  
Mírín and, send a scornful  
message to Caesar, iv, 353  
set to guard the baggage,  
iv, 355  
Áhriman, the Zoroastrian Evil  
Principle, sometimes used  
metaphorically, 139, i, 5, 6,  
50, 134, 138, 159, 194, 205,  
218, 236, 238, 241, 245,  
287, 315, 360; ii, 34, 42,  
43, 51, 53, 56, 78, 160,  
208, 214, 217, 250, 260,  
303, 315, 324, 358, 361,  
374 *seq.*, 405 *seq.*; iii,  
17, 123, 214, 228, 251, 266,  
275, 277, 287, 293, 294,  
300, 303, 304, 314, 316,  
318, 338; iv, 23, 41 *seq.*,  
45, 46, 89, 103, 124, 128,  
130, 162, 163, 179, 206,  
243, 272, 288, 342, 348,  
352; v, 17, 33, 36, 45, 50,  
90, 99, 103, 122, 123, 125,  
147, 177, 198, 206, 246,  
271, 276; vi, 106, 112,  
206, 240, 281, 290, 299,  
318, 384; vii, 89, 233,  
265, 271, 290, 312, 323,  
334, 359, 366, 367, 369;  
viii, 19, 21, 22, 86, 87, 176,  
177, 198, 210, 219, 243,  
293, 333, 364, 421; ix,  
8, 18, 73, 74, 79, 91  
envies Gaiúmart, i, 118  
son of (the Black Dív), i, 119  
Surúsh warns Gaiúmart  
against, i, 119  
ridden by Tahmúras, i, 125,  
127  
=Zahhák, i, 162.  
=Salm and Túr, i, 194

- Áhriman=Afrásiyáb, i, 366  
   Faith of, ii, 358; vi, 281, 290  
   =idolater, viii, 54  
   =Bandwí or Gustaham, viii, 89  
   =Kharrád, son of Barzín, viii, 111  
   =Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 295  
 Ahuna Vairya, Zoroastrian sacred formula, v, 17  
 Ahura Mazda (Urmuzd), the Zoroastrian Good Principle, i, 116, 235; ii, 2581; iv, 137  
 Ahwáz, city and province (Khúzistán, Susiana), i, 286; vi, 35, 199, 298, 357; vii, 197, 198, 201, 214, 224; viii 400, 402  
 Airán-végó (Írán-vej *q.v.*), ii, 189  
 Akem Manau, Zoroastrian demon, iii, 271, 272  
   =Akúmán=Akwán, iii 272  
   assáils Zarduhsht v, 17  
 Akesines (Chináb), Indian river, vi, 31, 64  
 Akhást, Túránian hero, 151; iv, 105  
   chosen to fight with Zanga, iv, 97  
   slain by Zanga, iv, 106  
 Akhshunwar (Achshunwar), Haitálian king, vii, 160  
 Akki, foster-father of Sargon I of Agani, v, 293  
 Aknaton, Pharaoh (XVIII dynasty)  
   lover of peace like Yazdagird, son of Shápúr, vi, 371  
 'Akr Babil, prison, viii, 194, 196  
 Akúmán. *See* Akem Manau.  
 Akwán, div, 150, iii, 270 *seq.*, 280 *seq.*, 284, 309  
   Story of, iii, 271  
   Professor Nöldeke on the, iii, 271  
   Firdausí on, iii, 273, 281  
   boulder of, iii, 271, 276, 309, 343, 344, 347  
   removed from pit's mouth by Rustam, iii, 345  
 Akwán, appears in the form of an onager, iii, 273 *seq.*  
   pursued by Rustam, iii, 275  
   foils Rustam, iii, 276  
   takes Rustam at a disadvantage, iii, 276  
   offers Rustam a choice of deaths, iii, 277  
   outwitted by Rustam, iii, 277  
   slain by Rustam, iii, 281  
   described by Rustam, iii, 282  
 Ál, place, ix, 93  
 Aláns (Alani), people, now the Ossetes of the Caucasus, 141, 167, 1, 217; iv, 14, 60, 65, 301; vi, 395; viii, 360  
   invade Írán, i, 19  
   castle of the, i, 223  
   taken by Káran, i, 223, *seq.*  
   castellan of, duped by Káran, i, 224  
   monarch of, vi, 395  
   Núshírwán's dealings with, vii, 216, 239 *seq.*  
   King of=Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 208, 209, 213  
 Alár, a village in Ardshír-Khurra *q.v.*, vi, 205  
 Albíruní, Abú Raihán Muhammad, Oriental author and chronologist (A.D. 973-1048), ii, 189  
   account of Alfír (Gangdizh?) by, ii, 190  
 Alburz, mountain-range south of the Caspian, also mythical range (Hara-bere-zaiti) surrounding the earth, 142, i, 4, 71, 145, 158, 235, 248, 250, 277, 298, 351, 373; ii, 11, 23, 27, 79, 96, 144, 336, 401; iii, 120; iv, 136; v, 202; vii, 177; ix, 95  
   Farfídún taken by his mother to, i, 152  
   Zál cast away, and found, upon, i, 241 *seq.*

- Alburz, Kai Kubád brought by  
Rustam from, i, 382 *seq*  
Kai Káu's' buildings on, ii,  
81
- Aleppo (Chalybon - Beroca), city  
in northern Syria, vii,  
218; viii, 41
- Alexander I, king of Epirus  
Italian expedition of, vi, 12  
attributed to Alexander  
the Great, vi, 12
- Alexander the Great (Sikandar  
*q.v.*), B.C. 356-323, son of  
Philip II of Macedon and  
his queen Olympias, i, 14,  
49; ii, 8 *seq.*; iv, 314;  
v, 30; vi, 193, 194, 204,  
252, 253, 373; vii, 383  
barrier of, i, 16; vi, 78  
legend of, in the Kurán,  
vi, 78  
persecutor of Zoroastrian-  
ism, i, 15, 59, 61, 63, 338  
paternity of, i, 55 and *note*;  
vi, 16, 18  
one of the Zoroastrian triad  
of evil, i, 59 and *note*  
said to have burnt the Zoro-  
astrian scriptures, i, 63  
Zoroastrianism under, i, 63  
Era of, ii, 190  
accompanied by experts to  
the East, vi, 11  
Romance of, origin and  
growth of, vi, 12 *seq.*  
diagram to illustrate, vi,  
84  
Syriac Christian Legend of,  
*See* Syriac.  
Muhammad's references to,  
in the Kurán, vi, 15, 77  
Persian national hero, how  
he became, vi, 15  
cities founded by, vi, 13,  
18  
name, Persian legend of his,  
vi, 19  
Aristotle, tutor of, vi, 29  
letter to, vi, 68  
correspondence about the  
succession with, vi, 81
- Alexander the Great, Roxana  
(Rúshanak) and, vi, 30, 32  
reign of, first years of, iii  
history and romance, vi,  
30  
Darius' banquet, his flight  
from, vi, 30  
his pursuit of, vi, 31  
murderers of, his treat-  
ment of them in history  
and romance, vi, 32, 33  
daughter of, marries, vi,  
33  
Fakírs and, vi, 61  
Calanus and, vi, 61  
Porus and, historical ac-  
count of, vi, 63  
camp of, his visit to, vi, 64  
iron steeds, his device of, vi,  
64  
stature of, vi, 64  
Cleophis and, vi, 65  
Ammon, Oasis of, his visit  
to, vi, 65  
Candace (Kaidáfa) and, vi,  
65 *seq.*  
Antigonus (Naitkún), as-  
sumes name of, vi, 66  
Plutarch's Life of, vi, 67  
Brahmans, visit of, to the,  
vi, 67  
Indus mistaken for the Nile  
by, vi, 68  
marvls of his return-jour-  
ney, vi, 69  
admiral of (Nearchus), vi, 69  
Amazons and, vi, 12, 72  
legend of, vi, 72  
Gloom and Fount of Life,  
legend of his expedition  
to, in the Pseudo-Cal-  
listhenes, vi, 74 *seq.*  
Andreas, his cook, legend of,  
vi, 76  
in the Kurán, vi, 77  
Will of, vi, 81  
death of, vi, 82  
dispute over his place of  
interment, vi, 82  
corpse of, taken to Memphis,  
vi, 82

- Alexander, the Great, interred at  
 Alexandria, vi, 82  
 tomb of, vi, 82  
 Mas'údí on, vi, 82  
 S. Chrysostom on, vi, 82  
 wars on the death of, vi,  
 197
- Alexander, son of Alexander the  
 Great and Cleophis (?), vi,  
 65
- Alexandria (*Iskandariya q.v.*),  
 city and sea-port in  
 Egypt, vi, 13, 15, 17, 83  
 founded by Alexander the  
 Great, vi, 13  
 Pseudo-Callisthenes orig-  
 inated at, vi, 13  
 Alexander, the Great, buried  
 at, vi, 82  
 his tomb at, vi, 82  
 Mas'údí on, vi, 82  
 S. Chrysostom on, vi, 82
- Alfir (*Gangdizh ?*), palace-fort-  
 tress of the capital of  
 Khárazm, ii, 190
- Al Hadr. *See* Hatra.
- 'Alí, husband of Fátima, daugh-  
 ter of Muhammad, and  
 fourth Khalífa (A.D. 656  
 —661)  
 Muhammad on, i, 12, 106  
 cult of, i, 13  
 known as "the Lion," i, 13,  
 107  
 assassination of, i, 13  
 Firdausí's references to, i,  
 24, 37, 40, 41, 106, 107;  
 ii, 337 and *note*
- 'Alí, the Dílámite, friend and  
 helper of Firdausí, i, 35;  
 ix, 121  
 transcriber of the *Sháh-  
 náma*, i, 39
- Alif, terminal, Firdausí's use of,  
 iii, 283
- Al Iskandarús. *See* Halai.
- Al Khidr (*Khisr q.v.*), the Green  
 Prophet, vi, 78 and *note*
- Alkús, Túránian hero, ii, 114
- Alkús, fights with, and worsts,  
 Zawára, ii, 115  
 slain by Rustam, ii, 115
- Allah, Muhammádan name of  
 the Deity, i, 50
- Al Mansúr, 'Abbásid Khalífa  
 (A.D. 754-775), founder of  
 Baghdád, vi, 254
- Almás, river, iii, 251
- Alp-Arselan (*Arslán*), Seljúk Sul-  
 tán (A.D. 1063-1073), ii,  
 219 *note*
- Alptigin, founder of the Ghazni-  
 vid dynasty, i, 20
- Altúníya, place, ix, 92
- Alwá, Rustam's spear-bearer,  
 slain by Kámús, 149,  
 ii, 188
- Alwá, Iránian hero, probably  
 identical with the above,  
 v, 166  
 slain by Núsh Ázar, v,  
 226
- Amasis, viii, 193
- Amazons, their disputed visit to  
 Alexander, the Great, vi,  
 12, 72  
 origin of, vi, 71  
 described, vi, 153 *seq.*  
 Sikandar's correspondence  
 with, and visit to, vi, 153  
*seq.*
- Ambár (*Anbár*, *Pírúz* - *Shápúr*),  
 city on the left bank of  
 the Euphrates some forty  
 miles west of Baghdád,  
 founded by Shápúr son of  
 Urmuzd (*Sapor II.*) The  
 word means "granaries."  
 vi, 327; viii, 188  
 foundation of, attributed to  
 the Azdites, i, 11
- Ambassadors, instances of kings  
 and chiefs going in person  
 as ambassadors or spies,  
 vi, 325
- Ambúh, place, iii, 41
- Amen-Ra, Egyptian god per-  
 sonated by Nectanebus,  
 vi, 16

- Ameshapentas, the, personifications of good qualities in Zoroastrian theology, iii, 271; v. 15 *seq.*
- Amida (Diyárbakr), city on the upper Tigris, vii, 187
- Amín, 'Abbásid Khalífa, (A.D. 809-813), i, 14
- Ammianus Marcellinus (4th century A.D.) Roman historian, v, 13
- Ammon, Oasis of, Alexander the Great's visit to, vi, 30, 65
- 'Ammúriya, Rúman stronghold in Asia Minor between Sívrí Hisár and Ak-Shahr probably representing the ancient Amorium but sometimes confounded with Angora (Angúriya) the ancient Ancyra further to the north-east, vi, 23 *note*, 89, viii, 46 (*Cf.* LEC. pp. 134, 153)
- Failakús marches from, against Dáráb, vi, 23
- Amorium. *See* 'Ammúriya.
- Amr, Arab chief, attacks Hurmuzd, viii, 93
- Ámul, city in Mázandarán, i, 145, 177, 289, 298, 344, 366, 367; ii, 18, 104; v, 284; vii, 89, 237; viii, 355, 356, 358, 392; ix, 86
- Ámul. *See* Ámwí.
- Amulet, of Kai Khusráu, iv, 133 given by Zarduhsht to Asfandiyár, v, 130
- Ámwí (Ámul, Amúyah, now Charjúi), city on the left bank of the Oxus where crossed by the route from Marv to Bukhárá, iv, 11, 65, 154, 184, 206; vii, 91 and *note*, 331, 357, 359; viii, 354
- Ánábdéh, vi, 32
- Anæsthetics, employment of, i, 236, 321 *seq.*
- Anbár. *See* Ambár.
- Ancyra. *See* Ammúriya.
- Andalús (Land of the West or of the Vandals), Spain, 159, vi, 66, 122, 138
- queen of (Kaidála *q.v.*), vi, 121 *seq.*
- Andamán, Íránian noble, viii, 202
- Andaráb, town in Afghánistán between Balkh and Kábul, iv, 65
- Andarímán, Túránian hero, 151, ii, 264; iv, 26; v, 29
- fight with Gustaham, iv, 87
- steed of, slain by Hajír, iv, 87
- rescued by the Turkmans, iv, 87
- chosen to fight with Gurgín, iv, 97
- slain by Gurgín, iv, 104
- Andarímán (Vandaremaini), brother of Arjásp, v, 12, 141, 155
- commands one wing of the host, v, 46
- executed by Asfandiyár, v, 158
- Andarznámak (Ahdnámak), Pahlaví treatise, vi, 257
- Andív, country, viii, 313
- Andiyán, Íránian warrior, 172 viii, 225, 257, 259, 269, 293, 294, 296
- deceived by Caesar's talisman, viii, 273
- Bahrám Chúbína writes to, viii, 285
- receives Kirmán, viii, 313
- Andreantícus, sea, vi, 77
- Andreas, Alexander the Great's cook,
- legend of, vi, 76 *seq.*
- in Kurán, vi, 77
- Androphagol, the, iii, 191
- Anestres Castri=Núshírwán, vii, 383
- Angora. *See* 'Ammúriya.
- Angra Mainyu=Ahriman, ii, 28
- Animals, domestication of, i, 126
- Ant, the, Firdausí's plea for, i, 201 and *note*

- Antákiya (Antioch), city in Syria on the Orontes, 167, viii, 41  
 taken by Núshírwán, vii, 218, 258 *seq.*
- Antigonus (Naitkún), name assumed by Alexander the Great in legend, vi, 66
- Antioch. *See* Antákiya.  
 New, vii, 218, 259
- Antiochus, Macedonian general, vi, 76
- Antiochus Sidetes, ii, 80, 81
- Aogemaide, Pahlaví treatise, iv, 136
- Antipater, regent in Macedonia for Alexander the Great, intrigued against by Olympias, vi, 82
- Aphrodite, goddess, iv, 315
- Apollo, god, and the Python, vi, 203
- Apologues, i, 242, 265, 285; iii, 332; iv, 18, 21, 28, 47; vi, 310; ix, 86
- Apothegms, i, 259, 260; ii, 157, 158, 170, 224, 254, 273, 298, 300, 313, 315, 330, 357, 383; iii, 53, 91, 96, 167, 188, 212, 260, 277, 301, 316, 341, 348, 350, 351; iv, 13, 32, 33, 38, 39, 59, 93, 108, 121, 131, 268; v, 78, 105, 168, 214, 242, 249, 250, 265; vi, 50, 303, 343; vii, 17, 18, 20, 42, 270, 277, 296, 301, 403; viii, 119, 166, 206, 215, 221, 235, 295; ix, 87, 88, 110
- Apprentice, a merchant's, entertains, and finds favour with, Bahrám Gúr, vii, 40 *seq.*
- Aprics (Pharoah-Hophra, B.C. 589-570), vi, 16
- Apsheron, peninsula on the western shore of the Caspian, i, 58, *note*
- Áptya. *See* Abtín.
- Arab, Arabs, 162, 163, ii, 79, 81, 99; iii, 14; iv, 14; v, 31; vi, 66, 171, 209, 254, 321 *seq.*, 377, 385, 396, 398, 402, 406; vii, 10, 107, 201, 219, 244, 245, 247; viii, 67, 94, 188, 190, 191, 208, 230, 241, 250, 251; ix, 3, 5, 25, 60, 69, 70, 72, 75 *seq.*, 79, 89, 92, 94 *seq.*, 114, 117  
 migration of, northward, i, 11  
 raids of, into Persian territory, i, 12; vi, 17, 21, 322  
 domination of, over Írán, i, 12 *seq.*  
 king=Mardás, i, 135  
 =Zahhák, i, 139, 275  
 rebellion of, against Kai Káuś, ii, 83  
 Afrásiyáb fights with, for Írán, ii, 92  
 Daráb demands tribute from vi, 22  
 steed, i, 243, 251, 290; vi, 380; viii, 126, 302; ix, 11  
 cymbal, vi, 244  
 invasion of, viii, 72, 93; ix, 3, 65 *seq.*  
 withdraw, viii, 96  
 sage, sages, vii, 406  
 quoted, vii, 277  
 tribes, ix, 65  
 triumph of, over Dhú Kár, ix, 66  
 chieftain, incites Abú Bakr to invade Persia, ix, 66  
 concentrate at Kádísíya, ix, 67  
 booty found by, at Ctesiphon (?), ix, 68  
 annex Mesopotamia, ix, 68  
 Khúzistán, ix, 68  
 =Umar, ix, 72  
 seal, ix, 82  
 =Sa'ad, ix, 84  
 defeated, ix, 85  
 Núshírwán's dream of, viii, 66 *seq.*, ix, 92

- Arabia, ii, 100; vi, 70, 72, 206, 322, 355; viii, 24 *note*  
 trade of, ancient, i, 11  
 Írán and, the portion of Íraj, i, 189  
 Shápúr son of Urmuzd's expedition to, vi, 322  
 Arabian, Arabians, vi, 378, 388, ix, 74, 85  
 Faith, vi, 95  
 Nights, i, 51; vi, 71, 78, 250; vii, 317  
 provenance of, vi, 250; vii, 3  
 quoted, vi, 73  
 Arabic, language, i, 32; vi, 147, 205; viii, 73; ix, 81  
 infrequent in Sháhnáma, i, 47  
 versions of Pahlaví texts, vi, 255 *seq.*  
 Fables of Bidpai (Kalíla and Dimna) translated into, vii, 382, 430  
 Tabarí. *See* Tabarí.  
 Arachosia, the district about Kandahar, vi, 32  
 Aragán (Rámkubád), town, vii, 188  
 Aral Sea, i, 57 *note*; iii, 10  
 Arar tree, vi, 19  
 Aras (Araxes), river in Ázarbáiján, v, 13, 14  
 confused with the Oxus, i, 71, 370  
 Árash, king of the Khúzians *q.v.*, iv, 146, 148  
 Árash, son of Kai Kubád. *See* Kai Árash.  
 Árash, Ashkánian king, vi, 197, 210  
 Árash, Íránian chief, vi, 394  
 Árash, city. *See* Hulwán.  
 Arastálís (Aristotle *q.v.*), 160, vi, 35  
 counsels Sikandar, vi, 179  
 sentences of, over the coffin of Sikandar, vi, 185  
 Árasti, uncle of Zarduhsht (Zoroaster), v, 17  
 Araxes (Aras *q.v.*), battle of, viii, 76  
 Árayish-i Rúm (Hierapolis), city in northern Syria, west of the Euphrates and north of Aleppo, vii, 217, 218, 254; viii, 188  
 taken by Núshirwán, vii, 255  
 Arba, river, viii, 194, 195  
 Archer, iv, 179  
 constellation, v, 86  
 Archery, i, 263, 297, 312, 359; ii, 163, 266, 293, 328; iii, 53 *seq.*, 74, 93, 98 *seq.*, 179 *seq.*, 246; iv, 38, 48, 99, 101, 102, 104, 107, 122, 179, 338; v, 111, 122, 229, 239 *seq.*, 272; vi, 379, 383 *seq.*; vii, 54, 55, 80, 118, 122, 125  
 Archimages, 141, 168, 170, 176  
 Architect, Rúman, and Khusráu Parwíz, viii, 401 *seq.*  
 Architecture, invention of, i, 129, 133  
 Archscribe, 171. *See* Ízid Gas-hasp and Mihrán.  
 Ard, day, i, 88, *q.v.*, ii, 287; iv, 252; vi, 298, 390 and *note*; vii, 112; ix, 70, 122  
 Sháhnáma finished on the day of, 1, 24  
 Ardabíl (Bádán - Pírúz *q.v.*), city in Ázarbáiján, ii, 336, 405, iv, 147, 188; vii, 89, 163, 224; viii, 93, 99, 100, 184, 226  
 Ardawán, Bahrám, Artabanus III or IV, the last Ashkánian (Parthian) king, 160, 161, vi, 3, 205, 214 *seq.*, 254 *seq.*, viii, 214, 285  
 Macrinus, his war and treaty with, i, 81  
 effect of, on Persian coinage, i, 81  
 = Bahrám, vi, 197, 210  
 status of, in Persian tradition, vi, 201

- Ardawán, daughter of 161, vi, 202  
 marries Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 202, 229  
 incited by her brother Bahman to poison Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 259  
 condemned to death, vi, 260  
 saved by Ardshír Pápakán's minister, vi, 260  
 gives birth to Shápúr, vi, 261  
 restored to favour, vi, 265  
 writes to Pápak, vi, 214  
 summons Ardshír Pápakán to court, vi, 214  
 receives gifts from Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 215  
 highly esteems Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 215  
 sons of, vi, 215, 255, 267  
*note*  
 their fate, vi, 228, 229 and *note*, 259  
 disgraces Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 216  
 Ardshír Pápakán intrigues with slave-girl of, 160, vi, 201, 217 *seq.*  
 eldest son of, made ruler of Párs, vi, 218 and *note*  
 consults the astrologers, vi, 218  
 Ardshír Pápakán, vainly pursued by, vi, 221 *seq.*  
 returns to Rai, vi, 223  
 writes to his son about Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 223  
 Ardshír Pápakán marches against, vi, 227  
 prepares to encounter Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 227  
 defeated, captured by Kharád, and slain by Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 228  
 buried by Tabák, vi, 229  
 palace of, at Rai spared (?) by Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 229 and *note*
- Ardawán, secretary of, slain by Shápúr, vi, 256  
 = Mithrak = Mithrak = Mádik (?), vi, 256  
 Ardíbihisht, ameshaspenta *q.v.*, iii, 286, 328  
 month, i, 82; v, 16, 39, 92 *note*  
 Ardshír, son of Bízhan, goes with Zarír to Rúm, iv, 360  
 hails Gushtásp as Sháh, iv, 362  
 Ardshír, son of Gushtásp, 155, v, 26, 51  
 death of, foretold by Jámásp, v, 49  
 slain, v, 57  
 Ardshír, Íránian hero, perhaps the son of Bízhan, *supra*  
 tells Nastúr where to find Zarír, v, 67  
 takes Farámarz prisoner, v, 288  
 Ardshír (Bahman *q.v.*), Sháh, vi, 213, 271 and *note*  
 meaning of, v, 259 and *note*  
 Ardshír (Artaxerxes II), brother of Shápúr, Sásánian Sháh, 163, vi, 3, 328  
 Shápúr arranges for the succession with, vi, 360 *seq.*  
 title of, vi, 364  
 abdication of, vi, 364  
 Ardshír, high priest *temp.*, Pírúz, vii, 179 *seq.*  
 released by Khúshnawáz, vii, 180  
 Ardshír, high priest *temp.*, Núshírwán, vii, 304, 333, 337, 342  
 discourse of, vii, 305  
 questions Búzurjmíhr, vii, 308  
 Ardshír Khurra (Khurra-i-Ardshír), city, (Gúr or Júr, now Fírúzábad), and district in Párs, vi, 199, 205, 206, 229 and *note*, 231, 241, 245; vii, 206; viii, 251, 252, 412 and *note*



Ardshîr Khurra, city, Ardshîr  
 Pâpakân builds a fire-  
 temple in, vi, 230  
 makes irrigation-works in,  
 vi, 230  
 meaning of, vi, 290 *note*  
 Ardshîr Pâpakân (Artaxerxes I),  
 Shâh and founder of the  
 Sâsânian dynasty, 160,  
 161; i, 42; ii, 10; v, 10;  
 vi, 193, 209 *note*, 213 *seq.*,  
 294 *seq.*, 303, 307, 315,  
 322, 325, 405; vii, 79,  
 185, 212; viii, 191, 214,  
 222, 265, 270, 285, 392,  
 393; ix, 105, 109, 111  
 Notes on, vi, 193 *seq.*, 254  
*seq.*  
 founds a new national  
 dynasty, restores Zoroas-  
 trianism, and collects its  
 scriptures, i, 62 *seq.*  
 genealogical table of his  
 descendants, vi, 3  
 rise of, compared to that of  
 Cyrus the Great, vi, 194  
 Tabarî's account of, vi, 198  
 legend of Cyrus the Great  
 transferred to, vi, 195  
 birth of, vi, 213  
 summoned to court by Arda-  
 wân, vi, 214  
 equipped by Pâpak, vi, 214  
 presents gifts to Ardawân,  
 vi, 215  
 Ardawân favours, vi, 215  
 prowess of, in the chase, vi,  
 215  
 disgraced, vi, 216  
 writes to Pâpak, vi, 216  
 advised by Pâpak, vi, 216  
 intrigues with Gulnâr, vi,  
 217 *seq.*  
 hears from Gulnâr of the  
 presage of the astrologers,  
 vi, 219  
 flees with Gulnâr to Pârs,  
 vi, 220 *seq.*  
 followed by the divine Grace  
 in the form of a mountain-  
 sheep, i, 374; vi, 221 *seq.*

Ardshîr Pâpakân, adherents flock  
 to, vi, 223  
 addresses his supporters, vi,  
 224  
 founds a city, vi, 202, 224  
 receives promises of help,  
 vi, 224  
 joined by Tabâk, vi, 225  
 Tabâk and, defeat Bah-  
 man, son of Ardawân, vi,  
 226  
 marches from Pârs against  
 Ardawân, vi, 227  
 defeats and slays Ardawân,  
 vi, 228  
 as recorded in Kârnâmak,  
 vi, 202  
 gives the spoil to the troops,  
 vi, 229  
 spares (?) Ardawân's palace  
 at Rai, vi, 229 and *note*  
 Tabâk counsels, vi, 229  
 marriage of, with Ardawân's  
 daughter, vi, 202, 229, 259  
 returns to Pârs, vi, 229  
 builds Khurra-i-Ardshîr, vi,  
 229 and *note*  
 irrigation-works of, at  
 Khurra-i-Ardshîr, vi, 230  
 war of, with the Kurds, vi,  
 196, 230 *seq.*  
 and Haftwâd, vi, 236 *seq.*  
 message sent by arrow to,  
 vi, 238  
 worsted by Haftwâd and  
 entertained and coun-  
 selled by two youths, vi,  
 239 *seq.*  
 slays Mihrak, vi, 241  
 marches to attack the Worm  
 vi, 241  
 gives instructions to Shahr-  
 gîr, vi, 241  
 stratagem of, against the  
 Worm, vi, 242  
 slays the Worm and its  
 attendants, vi, 244  
 summons Shahrîr, vi, 244  
 and *note*  
 takes Haftwâd's stronghold,  
 vi, 244

- Ardshír Pápakán, defeats and slays Haftwád and Sháh-wí, vi, 245  
 carries off the spoil, vi, 245  
 builds a Fire-temple, vi, 245  
 rewards the two youths, vi, 245  
 invasion of Kirmán by, vi, 205, 245  
 goes to Taisafún, vi, 245  
 principles of government of, vi, 250, 273 *seq.*, 286 *seq.*  
 Reign of, 161, vi, 254 *seq.*  
 Note on, vi, 254  
 length of, vi, 254  
 Tabarí on, vi, 254  
 coins of, vi, 256, 257, 265  
 Shápúr crowned by, vi, 257  
 cities of, vi, 257  
 prophecy of, vi, 257  
 enthroned at Baghdád, vi, 258  
 title of King of kings of, vi, 193, 199, 254, 258, 273  
 inaugural address of, vi, 258  
 daughter of Ardawán and, stories of, vi, 255  
 plot of, with her brother Bahman, to poison, vi, 259  
 discovers plot against him, vi, 260  
 consults his minister, vi, 260  
 condemns the daughter of Ardawán to death, vi, 260  
 minister of, saves daughter of Ardawán and mutilates himself, vi, 196, 261  
 Shápúr, son of, born, vi, 261  
 hears about Shápúr from his minister, vi, 262  
 recognises and acknowledges Shápúr, vi, 264  
 restores the daughter of Ardawán to favour, vi, 265  
 rewards his minister, vi, 265  
 makes a new coinage in honour of his minister, vi, 256, 265  
 builds Jund-i-Shápúr, vi, 266
- Ardshír Pápakán, harassed by wars, consults Kaid, vi, 266  
 wroth at Kaid's advice, vi, 267  
 seeks in vain for the daughter of Míhrak, vi, 268  
 referred to, vi, 270  
 discovers Urmuzd, vi, 271  
 counsels Urmuzd, vi, 280  
 calls and counsels Shápúr, vi, 286 *seq.*  
 Church and State, his views on, vi, 250 *seq.*, 286  
 duration of his dynasty, vi, 252, 257, 289  
 death of, vi, 291  
 Balúchistán, his failure to conquer, vii, 242  
 Nard, invention of, attributed to, vii, 382  
 True Cross in treasury of, viii, 380
- Ardshír, son of Shirwí, Sháh, 175, ix, 43 *seq.*  
 makes Pírúz general, ix, 44  
 entertains Pírúz at feast, ix, 48  
 death of, ix, 49  
 treasury of, squandered by Guráz, ix, 53
- Aregat-aspa. *See* Arjásp.
- Aries, constellation, i, 88, 118, 310, 335; iii, 26, 38, 187, 318; iv, 24, 147, 158, 180; v, 39, 109, 118, 119, 126; viii, 342, 394
- Ariobarzanes, the murderer of Darius Codomanus, vi, 32
- Ariobarzanes, satrap, vi, 32 and *note*
- Árish, legendary Íránian archer, v, 62; vii, 234 and *note*; viii, 75, 219 and *note*; ix, 25
- Aristobulus, Greek writer, *temp.* Alexander the Great, vi, 12
- Aristotle (Arastális *q.v.*), Greek philosopher (B.C. 384-322)

- Aristotle, Alexander the Great's  
 tutor, vi, 29  
 letter to, vi, 68  
 correspondence with,  
 about the succession, vi,  
 81, 83  
 silk-worm, his account of,  
 vi, 204
- Arjâsp, Túránian hero, ii, 264 ;  
 iv, 26
- Arjâsp (*Aregat-aspa*), king of  
 Túrân, 155, 156, i, 61 ;  
 ii, 9, 29 ; iii, 109 ; v, 9,  
 11 *seq.*, 20, 22, 24 *seq.*, 29,  
 31, 51 *seq.*, 89, 98, 99, 107  
*seq.*, 116, 141, 142, 159,  
 167, 171, 172, 180, 206 ;  
 vii, 330, 335, 337, 359 ;  
 viii, 95, 104, 148 ; ix, 104  
 hoard of, viii, 148  
 in receipt of tribute from  
 Gushtâsp, v, 32  
 hears of Gushtâsp's resolve  
 not to pay tribute, sum-  
 mons, and harangues his  
 priests, v, 36  
 sends Bîdirafsh and Nám-  
 khâst to Gushtâsp, v, 37,  
 40  
 receives Gushtâsp's answer  
 and calls out the host, v,  
 45  
 gives one wing to Kuhram,  
 v, 46  
 the other to Andarímân,  
 v, 46  
 the chief command to  
 Gurgsâr, v, 46  
 banner to Bîdirafsh, v, 46  
 vanguard to Khashâsh, v,  
 46  
 rear to Húshdîv, v, 46  
 marches against Írán, v, 46  
 defeat of, foretold by Jám-  
 âsp, v, 52  
 gives one wing to Bîdirafsh,  
 v, 55  
 the other to Gurgsâr, v,  
 56  
 centre to Námkhâst, v, 56  
 takes the rear himself, v, 56
- Arjâsp, gives Kuhram the com-  
 mand in chief, v, 56  
 thrice offers rewards to any  
 that will fight Zarír, v, 61,  
 62  
 offer of, accepted by Bîdi-  
 rafsh, v, 62  
 calls for Bîdirafsh to fight  
 Nastúr, v, 69  
 fights with the Íránians, v,  
 71  
 defeat of, v, 72  
 proclaimed by Gushtâsp,  
 v, 75  
 hears of Asfandiyâr's im-  
 prisonment and of Gush-  
 tâsp's absence in Sístân,  
 v, 86  
 Summons his chiefs, v, 86  
 sends Sitúh as spy to Írán,  
 v, 86  
 on receiving Sitúh's report  
 calls out the host, v, 87  
 sends Kuhram to attack  
 Balkh, v, 90  
 marches against Gushtâsp,  
 v, 94  
 commands the centre, v,  
 95  
 defeats Gushtâsp and be-  
 leaguers him on a moun-  
 tain, v, 96  
 Asfandiyâr's vow of, and  
 prayer for, vengeance on,  
 v, 103, 104  
 hears of Asfandiyâr's arrival,  
 v, 108  
 proposes to retreat, v, 108  
 sends away the spoil of  
 Balkh, v, 108  
 five sons of, v, 108  
 persuaded by Gurgsâr to re-  
 main and fight, v, 108, 109  
 makes Gurgsâr leader of the  
 host, v, 109  
 arrays the host, v, 109  
 commands the centre, v, 109  
 surveys the battlefield from  
 a height, v, 110  
 prepares for flight if needful,  
 v, 110

- Arjásp, dismayed at Asfandiyár's prowess, reproaches Gurgsár v, 111  
 hears of Gurgsár's capture and flees, v, 112  
 entertains Asfandiyár disguised as a merchant, v, 145  
 questions Asfandiyár, v, 146  
 allows Asfandiyár to entertain the Turkman chiefs, v, 149  
 prepares to attack Bishútan, v, 151  
 bids Kuhram prepare for war, v, 151  
 sends out Turkhán with troops to reconnoitre, v, 151  
 hears from Kuhram that Asfandiyár has come, v, 152  
 bids the Turkmans march out in force, v, 152  
 palace of, attacked by Asfandiyár, v, 153  
 arms and encounters Asfandiyár, v, 153, 154  
 beheaded by Asfandiyár, v, 154  
 palace of, fired and his women carried off by Asfandiyár, v, 154, 162,  
 head of, thrown from the ramparts of the Brazen Hold, v, 157  
 sons of, grieve for, v, 157  
 Asfandiyár takes the treasure of, v, 161  
 Khán of Chín descended from, vii, 334
- Arjuna, one of the five Pándavas (Indian mythology) iv, 138, 139
- Ark, 158
- Arman, Armenia or district in Ázarbáiján, vii, 263
- Armaní, Íránian chief, ix, 74
- Armenia (Arman, Irmán *q.v.*), country, iii, 12; vi, 202, 203; vii, 153, 224; viii, 93, 96, 184, 193, 202, 377
- Armenia, Roman, vii, 187
- Armenian, Armenians (Irmánians), iii, 286; viii, 188, 189, 195, 226, 248, 282  
 version of the Pseudo-Calisthenes, vi, 14  
 —like, viii, 254  
 =Mausil, viii, 293 and *note*
- Armín, son of Kai Kubád. *See* Kai Armín.
- Arnawáz, sister of Jamshíd, wife of Zahhák and Farídún, and mother of Íraj, i, 142  
 married to Zahhák, i, 146 *seq.*  
 counsels Zahhák as to his dream, i, 148  
 Farídún meets, i, 162  
 Zahhák tries to kill, i, 167  
 son of, by Farídún, i, 177
- Arnold, Mathew, his "Sohrab and Rustum," ii, 118
- Arrán, the modern Karabagh, the region between the Kur and Aras rivers, i, 9
- Arrian, Greek historian (A.D. 96-180), vi, 31, 68  
*Anabasis* of, vi, 12  
*Índica* of, vi, 12  
 Caspian Gates of, vi, 32  
 on the stature of Porus, vi, 64  
 Ichthyophagi, vi, 69 *seq.*  
 Alexander and the Amazons, vi, 72  
 death of Alexander, vi, 82
- Arrow-shots, three famous, viii, 75
- Bahrám Chúbína's, viii, 126
- Arsaces, name of the founder and other kings of the Parthian (Ashkánian) dynasty, vi, 197
- Arsacid, Arsacids, dynastic title of the above, iii, 9; vi, 205, 255; vii, 156, 185, 212  
 imperial system of, vi, 198  
 some of, escape from Ardshír Pápakán to Armenia, vi, 203

- Arsac'id, rivalry of, with Sásánians, viii, 73  
 Arsalás, murderer of Darius Codomanus, vi, 32  
 Arses, Sháh (B.C. 338-336) vi, 29  
 Arslán Jázib, one of Mahmúd's generals, i, 100  
     referred to, i, 114  
 Artabanus III (II according to some reckonings), Parthian king (A.D. 10-40), iii, 9, 10  
 Artabanus, son of above, iii, 9  
 Artabanus, Persian captain of the guard *temp.* Xerxes, v, 282  
     Rustam and, v, 282  
 Artabanus III or IV (Ardawán *q.v.*), vi, 201  
 Ariang, the house of the heresiarch Mání, ii, 19 and *note*; vii, 355 and *note*; viii, 172 and *note*, 362 and *note*  
 Artaxerxes Longimanus, Sháh, v, 281, 282  
     Bahman and, v, 282  
 Artaxerxes Mnemon, Sháh, i, 59  
 Artaxerxes Ochus, Sháh (B.C. 359-338), vi, 18 *note*, 29  
     Nectanebus II conquered by vi, 29  
     murdered, vi, 29  
 Artaxerxes I, Sásánian Sháh. *See* Ardshír Pápakán.  
 Artaxerxes II (Ardshír brother of Shápúr), Sásánian Sháh, vi, 363  
 Arts, invention of the. *See* Caiúmart, Húshang, Tahmúras, and Jamshíd.  
 'Arús, treasure, viii, 406 and *note*, ix, 20  
 Arwand (Dijla, Tigris), ii, 392, 404; vi, 329; viii, 90; ix, 85, 92  
     Farídún's crossing of the, i, 160  
 Arzhang, a div and commander of the troops of Mázan-darán, 143; ii, 43, 44, 56 *seq.*, 63, 64; v, 203  
 Arzhang, put in charge of Kai Káu's and his troops when taken prisoners, ii, 41  
     slain by Rustam, ii, 57  
 Arzhang, dungeon of, iii, 309  
 Arzhang, Túránian hero, 148, ii, 76, 77  
     challenges the Íránians, iii, 119  
     slain, iii, 120  
 Arzhang, Mání the heresiarch's house. *See* Artang.  
 Aryan, Aryans, race, iii, 10 and *note*, iv, 137  
     race, i, 7  
     early seats of, i, 7  
     meaning of, i, 7  
     organization of, i, 7  
     primitive religion of, i, 7  
     belief in magic of, i, 8  
     division of, i, 8  
     India and Írán conquered by, i, 8  
     Indian, their relations with the Íránians, i, 15  
 Árzú, daughter of Sarv and wife of Salm, i, 188 and *note* referred to, i, 178 *seq.*  
 Árzú, daughter of Máhiyár the jeweller, vii, 59, 61  
     referred to, vii, 55, 56, 58  
     sings to Bahrám Gúr, vii, 60  
     Bahrám Gúr woos and weds, vii, 61 *seq.*  
     meaning of, vii, 65 *note*  
 Ascalon, city in Palestine, v, 292  
*Asclepias acida*, plant. *See* Homa.  
 Asfandiyár (Spento-data, Spandát), mythical Íránian hero, son of Sháh Gush-tásp, and the rival in legend of Rustam, 155-157, i, 42, 55; ii, 29; v, 9, 10, 12, 24 *seq.*, 29, 30, 41 *seq.*, 45, 49, 69 *seq.*, 90 *seq.*, 258, 259, 261, 279, 281 *seq.*, 289, 290, 293; vi, 15, 49, 55, 200, 213, 224, 242, 251, 271; viii, 95, 104 and

Asfandiyár—*cont.*

*note*, 171, 270, 332, 395  
*note* ; ix, 25, 26 *note*, 104  
 invulnerability of, v, 19  
 sisters of, 156, v, 20, 22  
     carried off by the Turk-  
     mans, v, 93, 100, 171  
     rescued by, v, 153, 162  
     lament over, v, 252 *seq.*  
 marriage of, with Humái,  
     v, 22, 77  
     ignored by Firdausí, v, 22  
 birth of, v, 32  
 answers, in conjunction with  
     Zarír and Jámásp, Ar-  
     jásp's letter, v, 42  
 triumph of, over Arjásp  
     foretold by Jámásp, v, 52  
 given command of one wing,  
     v, 55  
 addresses his five brothers,  
     v, 65  
 hears his father's offer of  
     the crown and throne to  
     the avenger of Zarír, v, 66  
 slays Bídirafsh, v, 70  
 presents the head of Bídira-  
     fsh and the steed of Zarír  
     to Gushtásp, v, 71  
 divides the host, v, 71  
 attacks, with Nastúr and  
     Núsh Ázar, the Turkmans,  
     v, 71  
 grants quarter to the Turk-  
     mans, v, 72  
 made chief ruler of Írán  
     under Gushtásp and sent  
     by him to convert the  
     world, v, 76  
 rests from his labours, v, 77  
 makes Farshídwad gover-  
     nor of Khurásán, v, 77  
 reports the success of his  
     administration to Gush-  
     tásp, v, 77  
 slandered by Gurazm, v, 78  
 recalled to court, v, 80 *seq.*  
 sons of, 157, v, 80, 81  
 resigns his host to Bahman,  
     v, 82  
 arraigned by Gushtásp, v, 83

Asfandiyár, put in bonds, v,  
84

sent to Gumbadán, v, 84  
 solaced by Bahman and  
     others, v, 85  
 Jámásp advises Gushtásp  
     to release, v, 97  
 hears of arrival of Jámásp,  
     v, 98, 99  
 parley of, with Jámásp, v,  
     99 *seq.*  
 eight and thirty brothers  
     of, v, 101, 103, 111, 160  
 bids Jámásp send for black-  
     smiths, v, 101  
 breaks his bonds himself, v,  
     102, 206  
 calls for his steed and arms,  
     v, 102  
 sets off with Jámásp, Bah-  
     man, and Núsh Ázar, v,  
     103  
 vow of, v, 103  
 laments over Farshídwad,  
     v, 104  
 prays that he may avenge  
     Farshídwad on Arjásp, v,  
     104  
 shrouds Farshídwad, v, 105  
 sees and addresses the corpse  
     of Gurazm, v, 105  
 passes the Turkman trenches  
     and defeats the outposts,  
     v, 106  
 interview of, with Gush-  
     tásp, v, 106  
 receives the promise of the  
     crown and undertakes to  
     deliver Gushtásp, v, 107  
 arrays and leads the host,  
     v, 109  
 attacks the Turkmans, v,  
     110  
 defeats Kuhram, v, 110  
 takes Gurgsár prisoner, v,  
     111  
 defeats Arjásp, v, 112, 206  
 grants quarter to the Turk-  
     mans, v, 113  
 distributes the spoil, v,  
     114

Asfandiyár, undertakes to rescue his sisters from the Turkmans, v, 115  
 prepares to invade Túrán, v, 115  
 Seven Stages (*Haft Khwán*) of, ii, 29; v, 27, 118, 119, 121, 135, 162; viii, 171  
 Story of, 156, v, 116 *seq.*  
 compared with Rustam's, v, 117  
 rivalry in legend between Rustam and, v, 116  
 quits Balkh and goes, with Gurgsár as guide, to Túrán, v, 120  
 offers the kingdom of the Turkmans to Gurgsár in return for faithful service, v, 120  
 questions Gurgsár, v, 120 *seq.*, 124, 125, 128, 131, 134, 139, 141  
 during his adventures in the Seven Stages, leaves Bishútán in command, v, 122, 124, 126, 129, 132 *note*, 144  
 praised by Bishútán and the host, v, 123, 125, 131, 133  
 scythed chariot made by, v, 126  
 revived by Bishútán after encountering the dragon, v, 127  
 song of, v, 129  
 amulet given to, by Zar-duhsht, v, 130  
 encourages the Íránians to persevere, v, 136  
 prays for deliverance from the snow, v, 138  
 leaves the baggage behind, v, 138  
 reproaches Gurgsár for giving false information, v, 139, 140  
 offers to make Gurgsár captain of the Brazen Hold if he will be a trusty guide, v, 140

Asfandiyár, guided by Gurgsár crosses ford with host, v, 140  
 cursed by Gurgsár, v, 141  
 slays Gurgsár, v, 141  
 surveys the Brazen Hold, v, 142  
 captures, questions, and slays two Turkmans, v, 142  
 Bishútán and, consult, v, 143  
 stratagem of, to take the Brazen Hold, v, 116, 143  
 disguised as a merchant, interviews Arjásp, v, 145  
 assumes the name of Khar-rád, v, 146  
 questioned by Arjásp, v, 146  
 trades as a merchant in the Brazen Hold, v, 147  
 meets his sisters, v, 147  
 gives a banquet to the Turkman chiefs, v, 149  
 surprises the Brazen Hold, v, 152 *seq.*  
 provides for his sisters' safety, v, 153  
 attacks the palace of Arjásp, v, 153  
 encounters Arjásp, v, 154  
 beheads Arjásp, v, 154  
 fires Arjásp's palace, v, 154  
 carries off the women, v, 154  
 quits the Brazen Hold and leaves Sáwa in charge, v, 154  
 joins Bishútán, v, 155  
 pursues Kuhram to the Brazen Hold, v, 156  
 encounters and takes Kuhram prisoner, v, 157  
 grants no quarter to the Turkmans, v, 158  
 puts to death Andarímán and Kuhram, v, 158  
 announces his victory to Gushtásp, v, 159  
 disposes of the spoil, v, 161

- Asfandiyár, carries off his sisters, the womenfolk of Arjásp, and others from the Brazen Hold, v, 162  
 sets fire to, and dismantles, the Brazen Hold, v, 162  
 sends his sons homeward by different routes, v, 162  
 returns himself by the Seven Stages, v, 162  
 picks up his left baggage, v, 162  
 hunts while waiting for his sons, v, 162  
 rejoined by his sons, v, 163  
 welcome of, on his return to frán, v, 163  
 banquets with Gushtásp, v, 164  
 fight of, with Rustam, Story of, 156  
 recited by Nadr, son of Hárith, at Mecca, v, 166  
 complains to his mother of Gushtásp's treatment of him, v, 167  
 counselled by his mother, v, 168, 175  
 fate of, foretold by Jámásp, v, 169  
 recounts his deeds before Gushtásp, v, 170  
 promised the throne by Gushtásp when he has brought Rustam and his kin in bonds to court, v, 173, 174  
 meets with an ill omen on starting for Zábulistán, v, 177  
 consults with Bishútan, v, 178  
 sends Bahman on an embassy, v, 179 *seq.*  
 message of, to Rustam, v, 179  
 receives Rustam's answer from, and is wroth with, Bahman, v, 191  
 converses of Rustam with Bishútan, v, 192
- Asfandiyár, goes attended to meet Rustam, v, 192  
 parleys with Rustam, v, 192 *seq.*  
 declines Rustam's invitation to visit him, v, 193  
 invites Rustam to a feast, v, 195  
 repents of having invited Rustam, v, 196  
 counselled by Bishútan to keep on friendly terms with Rustam, v, 196, 217  
 does not summon Rustam to the feast, v, 197  
 wrangles with Rustam, v, 198 *seq.*  
 does not assign Rustam his proper seat at the feast, v, 200  
 remonstrated with by Rustam, v, 200  
 bids Bahman resign his own seat to Rustam, v, 200  
 vilifies Zál and Rustam, v, 201  
 recounts his lineage, v, 205  
 his exploits, v, 205  
 his capture of a hill-fort, v, 206  
 tries a handgrip with Rustam, v, 208  
 challenges Rustam, v, 209  
 astonished at Rustam's prowess at the board, v, 210  
 declines Rustam's overtures, v, 211 *seq.*  
 calls Zábulistán "Babblestead," v, 216  
 parodies Rustam's address to royal tent-enclosure, v, 216  
 arms for fight with Rustam, v, 223  
 refuses Rustam's suggestion of a general engagement, v, 224  
 informed by Bahman of the slaying of Núsh Ázar and Mihr-i-Núsh, v, 227



- Asfandiyár, enraged with Rustam, v, 228  
 wounds Rustam and Rakhsh, v, 229  
 jeers at Rustam, v, 229  
 calls upon Rustam to surrender, v, 230  
 returns to camp, laments for Núsh Ázar and Mihr-i-Núsh, and sends their corpses to Gushtásp with a message, v, 232  
 converses with Bishútan of the fight with Rustam, v, 232, 240  
 Símurgh instructs Rustam how to overcome, v, 237 *seq.*  
 branch of tamarisk fatal to, v, 239 and *note*  
 summoned by Rustam to fight and becomes despondent, v, 240  
 Rustam's final effort for peace with, v, 241 *seq.*  
 Bahman and Bishútan hear of the overthrow of, v, 244  
 address of, to Bishútan, v, 245  
 Rustam bewails, v, 246  
 confides Bahman to Rustam, v, 248  
 foretells evil for Rustam, v, 248  
 gives his last charge to Bishútan, v, 249  
 death of, v, 250  
 Rustam laments over, v, 250  
 corpse of, sent to Gushtásp by Rustam, v, 251  
 funeral procession of, conducted by Bishútan, v, 251  
 lamentations over, v, 252 *seq.*  
 corpse of, displayed by Bishútan, v, 253  
 Rustam writes to Gushtásp to excuse himself in the matter of, v, 256  
 Xerxes and, v, 282
- Asfandiyár, Bahman on the vengeance due for, v, 283  
 referred to, v, 288  
 Asfandiyár-náma (Spand-dát-náma), v, 26, 27  
 Ashemaogha, vii, 188  
 Ashi Vanguhi, the genius of piety, iv, 137  
 Ashk, presumed founder of the Ashkánian (Parthian) dynasty, vi, 197, 210  
 meaning of, vi, 197  
 Ashkabús, Túránian hero, 148, iii, 183, 186, 207, 268  
 challenges the Iránians, iii, 179  
 Ruhhám worsted by, iii, 179  
 Rustam's fight with, iii, 109, 179 *seq.*  
 referred to, viii, 75  
 parleys with Rustam, iii, 180  
 slain by Rustam, iii, 181  
 Ashkánian, Ashkánians, race and dynasty, i, 49; iii, 9, 11; v, 10, 282; vi, 196, 209; viii, 214  
 duration of rule, vi, 193  
 times, Firdaus's lack of materials for, vi, 193  
 surviving traditions of, transferred to other dynasties, vi, 194  
 importance of, vi, 194  
 genealogy, vi, 197  
 Ashkash, Iránian hero, iii, 33, 34, 89, 347, 350, 352; iv, 13, 57, 61, 65  
 Rustam and, go to rescue Bízhan, iii, 334  
 conveys baggage toward Irán, iii, 346  
 Kai Khusrau sends, to Khárazm, iv, 15  
 Shída defeated by, iv, 60, 72  
 troops of, recalled, iv, 145  
 sent with a host to Zam, iv, 157  
 pillage of Makrán by, stopped by Kai Khusrau, iv, 243

- Ashkash, appointed governor of Makrán, iv, 244  
 Kai Khusrau welcomed by, on his return from Gangdizh, iv, 251  
 Ashtád, Iránian chief, ix, 11 *seq.*  
 chosen to visit Khusrau Parwíz at Taisafún, ix, 9  
 and Kharrád parley with Galínúsh, ix, 11  
 visit Khusrau Parwíz, ix, 12  
 report to Shírwí, ix, 27  
 Asia, iv, 315, v, 293, viii, 187  
 Minor, vi, 30; viii, 193, 194  
 Central, vi, 73  
 Asmodeus, demon, iii, 272  
 Asoka, Indian king (B.C. 264-228-7), i, 15  
 Asp, as Persian termination, ii, 9  
 Ássurbanipal, Assyrian king, and Khusrau Parwíz, reigns of compared, viii, 193  
 Assyria, v, 292  
 Assyrians, i, 10  
 invasions of Irán by, i, 10  
 Astawadh. *See* Haftwád.  
 Astivihád, demon, iv, 137  
 Astrolabe, i, 104, 188, 310 *note*;  
 ii, 215, 273; iv, 158, 297;  
 vi, 376; vii, 353; ix, 73  
 Astrologer, Astrologers, Astrology, i, 104, 188, 255, 310  
 and *note*; ii, 233, 284,  
 409; iv, 27, 158, 159, 279,  
 284, 334, 335; v, 48, 168  
*seq.*, 263; vi, 108, 109,  
 114, 132, 195, 198, 201,  
 218, 227, 377; ix, 73  
 importance of, in Sháh-námá, i, 52  
 consulted by Farídún, i, 194  
 Minúchíhr i, 251, 307  
 Zál i, 255  
 Sám i, 278  
 Kai Káuš ii, 103, 215, 217  
 Afrásiyáb, ii, 273; iv, 158  
 Siyáwush, ii, 282  
 Rustam, iii, 219  
 Kai Khusrau, iv, 158  
 Húmán, v, 310  
 Astrologer, consulted by Sikan-  
 dar, vi, 180  
 Ardawán, vi, 218  
 Yazlagird, son of Shápúr,  
 vi, 375 *seq.*, 390  
 Bahrám Gúr, vii, 144, 145  
 Khán of Chín, vii, 353  
 Talhand, vii, 408, 413, 418  
 Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 372  
 Astyages (Istuvegu), king of the  
 Medes (Manda *q.v.*, B.C.  
 584-550)  
 conquered by Cyrus, i, 18;  
 vi, 194  
 identified by Armenian his-  
 torians with Zahhák, i, 72,  
 144  
 Mandane and, legend of, ii,  
 190  
 Afrásiyáb and, in legend, ii,  
 191  
 Asura. *See* Ahúra.  
 Atbara, tributary of the Nile, vi,  
 65  
 Athenaeus, Greek writer (2nd-3rd  
 centuries A.D.), iv, 316  
*Deipnosophistae* of, ii, 10  
 quoted, iv, 314  
 Athens, schools of, closed by  
 Justinian, vii, 280  
 Áthravans, priests of the Cult of  
 Fire, i, 56  
 Áthwya. *See* Abtín.  
 Atkinson, James, on the Sháh-  
 náma, vi, 250  
 Atossa, wife of Cambyes and  
 Darius Hystaspis, v, 11  
 =Hutaosa, wife of Gush-  
 tásp (?), v, 11  
 Atropatene (Ázarbáiján *q.v.*), i,  
 9, 61  
 primitive seat of Fire-wor-  
 ship, i, 56  
 sub-kingdom in Parthian  
 times, vi, 198  
 Attock, town on the Indus in  
 northern India, vi, 52  
 Aurand, father of Sháh Luhrásp,  
 v, 205  
 Aurva-aspa (Luhrásp *q.v.*), iv,  
 316; v, 11

- Autumnal equinox, iv, 313  
 Kai Lulhrásp crowned at, iv, 313  
 Avars, Caucasian tribe, viii, 104  
 Avasta. *See* Zandavasta  
 Avidius Cassius, Roman general, vi, 291 *note*  
 Áwa, Íránian hero, iv, 140  
 Áwáza, stronghold, 170, viii, 134, 138  
 Axumite, Ethiopian, dynasty, viii, 24 *note*  
 Áyás, region, v, 61, 74, 107  
 Áyín Gashasp (Yazdánbakhsh), Íránian noble, 171, viii, 75, 150 *note*, 222  
 Hurmuzd consults, viii, 174, 177  
 and the prisoner, story of, viii, 177 *seq.*  
 marches to Hamadán, viii, 178  
 consults a seer, viii, 178  
 murdered, viii, 181  
 avenged by Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 181  
 troops of, disperse, viii, 181  
 Ázád Sarv, Firdausi's authority for the Story of Rustam and Shaghád, v, 260 *seq.*  
 Ázád Sarv, archmage and agent of Núshírwán, v, 261, vii, 283 and *note*  
 goes to Marv, vii, 283  
 discovers Búzurjmihr, vii, 283  
 returns with Búzurjmihr to court, vii, 283  
 Ázáda, Rúman slave-girl, vi, 382  
 goes hunting with Bahrám Gúr, vi, 382  
 tries to shame Bahrám Gúr in his markmanship, vi, 383  
 slain by Bahrám Gúr, vi, 384 and *note*  
 Ázar (Ázarbáiján *q.v.*), ii, 195  
 Ázar, genius, iii, 287, 328  
 Ázar (Ádar), month and day, i, 88, 89; vi, 411; viii, 244, 421; ix, 17  
 Ázar Ábádagán (Ázarakhsh, Ázargashasp *q.v.*), Fire-temple at Shíz (Takht-i-Sulamán) near the south-eastern border of Ázarbáiján, not at Tabríz with which the place has been wrongly identified (NT, p. 100, *note*), 172, iv, 259; vii, 86, 224, 362; viii, 282; ix, 74  
 importance of, i, 61  
 visited by Kai Khusráw, iii, 20  
 Kai Khusráw and Kai Káuś go on a pilgrimage to, iv, 258  
 Khátún, wife of Khán, sent to serve at, vii, 5  
 Bahrám Gúr visits, vii, 86, 94  
 Núshírwán visits, vii, 250, 303  
 Ázar Afrúz, third son of Asfandiyár, v, 81  
 Ázarakhsh (Ázargashasp, Ázar Ábádagán *q.v.*), Fire-temple, i, 61  
 importance of, i, 61  
 Ázarbáiján (Atropatene *q.v.*), province in north-western Persia, i, 9, 61; ii, 336; iv, 136; v, 16; vi, 198, 203; vii, 160, 214  
 meaning of, i, 56  
 Ázargashasp, spirit of the lighting, i, 73, 248, 309, 349; ii, 57, 294, 345; iii, 23, 53, 72, 92, 97, 114, 194, 276, 327; iv, 84, 100, 147, 175, 275, 307, 360; vi, 381; vii, 21, 79, 232; viii, 46, 122, 152, 176, 245, 256, 415  
 temple of (Ázar Ábádagán *q.v.*), iv, 136, 258, 259; vii, 89, 250, 317, 365; viii, 68, 184, 210 and *note*  
 visited by Kai Khusráw, iii, 20

Ázargashasp, templ<sup>e</sup> of Kai  
 Khusrau and Kai Káuś  
 go on a pilgrimage to,  
 iv, 258  
 referred to, iv, 264  
 = Gushasp *q.v.*, vi, 212  
 and *note*  
 Bahráw Gúr visits, vii,  
 86, 139  
 high priest of, converts  
 Sap'núd to Zoroastrian-  
 ism, vii, 139  
 Núshírwán visits, vii, 250,  
 363  
 Khusrau Parwíz visits,  
 viii, 283, 307, 312  
 Ázargashasp, Íránian warrior,  
 viii, 296  
 Ázar Makán, father of Farrukh-  
 zád, viii, 408  
 Ázarmduklit, Sháh, 175, v, 294 ;  
 ix, 56, 59, 69  
 reproaches Kubád, ix, 7  
 end of, ix, 59, 60  
 Ázarnarsí, son of Hurmuzd son  
 of Narsí, vi, 318  
 Azdites, Arab tribe, i, 11  
 Azhi, Azi (Daháka, Zahhák *q.v.*),  
 i, 142 ; ii, 81

## B

BÁBAK, Tribal King. *See* Pápak.  
 Bábak, muster-master of Núshír-  
 wán  
 bidden to enrol the host,  
 167, vii, 230  
 insists on Núshírwán's at-  
 tendance for enrolment,  
 vii, 231  
 asks pardon of the Sháh, vii,  
 232  
 Bábar, founder of the Mogul  
 dynasty in India  
 resolutions of, as to wine-  
 drinking, vii, 75 *note*  
 Babbblestead, nonce name given  
 by Asfandiyár to Zábul-  
 istán, v, 216  
 Bábil (Babylon *q.v.*), 160  
 Babr-i-Bayán, a surcoat of leo-  
 pard or tiger skin worn by  
 Rustam in battle, iii, 184,  
 186  
 referred to, iii, 278  
 Babylon (Bábil, gate of the god),  
 city on the left bank of  
 the Euphrates, now repre-  
 sented by the modern  
 Híllah on the right bank,  
 ii, 80 ; iii, 286 ; vi, 17,  
 31, 81, 83 ; viii, 194, 249 ;  
 ix, 65, 92  
 hanging gardens of, v, 293  
 Sikandar marches toward,  
 vi, 176, 178  
 prodigious birth at, vi, 81,  
 180  
 Sikandar sickens at, vi, 181  
 dies at, vi, 81, 183  
 Zahhák king of, ix, 65  
 Babylonia, ii, 80, 81  
 Babylonian, vi, 254  
 script, vi, 320  
 Bacchus, Saint and Martyr, viii,  
 188  
 Bactria, region between the  
 Hindu Kush and the  
 Oxus, vi, 32, 198  
 Bactrian plains, iii, 10  
 camels, viii, 47 ; ix, 93  
 Badakshán, region south of the  
 Upper Oxus and east of  
 Balkh, famous for its  
 rubies, iv, 65, 192  
 signet-ring of, i, 300  
 gem of, vi, 382 and *note*  
 Bádán-Pírúz (Shahrám - Pírúz,  
 Ardabíl *q.v.*), city built  
 by Sháh Pírúz in Ázar-  
 báiján, 166, vii, 160, 163  
 Badar, Badr, battle of, ii, 337  
*note*, v, 166  
 Bád Áwar, treasure viii., 406,  
 and *note*, ix., 20.  
 Baeton, Greek writer, *temp.*  
 Alexander the Great, vi,  
 12  
 Baghdád, city on the Tigris,  
 founded by the 'Ab-  
 báśid Khalífa Al Mansúr

Baghdád—*cont.*

as his capital in A.D. 702  
on the site of an old Baby-  
lonian city (Baghdadu),  
161, 165, i, 14, 160; iii,  
35; iv, 147, 256; v, 28;  
vi, 254, 290, 322, 327;  
vii, 83 and *note*; viii, 109  
*note*, 112, 174, 193, 203,  
393; ix, 68

Ardshír Pápakán enthroned  
at, vi, 258

Yazdagird quits, ix, 88

Persian settlement of, ix, 67  
raided by Arabs, ix, 67

Bágiz, vi, 32

Bagoas, vi, 29

Bahár, district in Turkistán  
where Siyáwushgird was  
built, ii, 286

Bahman (Vohu Manau), ame-  
shaspenta *q.v.*, iii, 286,  
327; v, 16; vi, 362 and  
*note*

Yasht, Pahlaví Text, vii, 188  
month and day, iv, 81 *note*,  
v, 310; vii, 31 and  
*note*

Bahman (Ardshír, Artaxerxes),  
son of Asfandiyár, Sháh,  
156, 157, i, 42; ii, 9;  
v, 81, 166, 251, 254, 293,  
297, 303; vi, 20 *note*, 34  
and *note*, 49, 200, 213,  
270 and *note*; viii, 270  
eldest son of Asfandiyár, v,  
80

Asfandiyár resigns the host  
to, v, 82

hears of Asfandiyár's im-  
prisonment, v, 85

goes with others to solace  
him, v, 85

accompanies Asfandiyár  
from Gumbadán, v, 103  
sent on an embassy, v,  
179 *seq.*

crosses the Hírmund, v, 182  
coming of, reported to Zál,  
v, 182

interview of, with Zál, v, 183

Bahman, follows Rustam to the  
hunting-ground, v, 184  
tries to kill Rustam, v,  
184

interview of, with Rustam,  
v, 185 *seq.*

entertained by Rustam, v,  
186

astonished at Rustam's  
appetite, v, 186

leaves Rustam, v, 190

gives Rustam's answer to  
Asfandiyár, v, 191

Asfandiyár's wrath with, v,  
191

resigns his seat at the feast  
to Rustam, v, 200

informs Asfandiyár of the  
slaying of Núsh Ázar and  
Míhr-i-Núsh, v, 227

hears of Asfandiyár's over-  
throw, v, 244

confided to Rustam by  
Asfandiyár, v, 248

Zawára warns Rustam  
against, v, 250

remains with Rustam, v,  
252, 256

instructed by Rustam and  
profits thereby, v, 256

Gushtásp advised by Jám-  
ásp to write to, v, 258

Gushtásp's letter of recall  
to, v, 258

equipped by Rustam for his  
journey, v, 258

welcomed and called Ard-  
shír by Gushtásp, v, 259  
and *note*

long arms of, v, 281

appointed by Gushtásp to  
succeed him, v, 279

historical position of, in  
Persian legend, v, 281

ascends the throne and har-  
angues the chiefs on the  
vengeance due for Asfan-  
diyár, v, 283

invades Sístán, v, 284 *seq.*

sends a hostile message to  
Zál. v. 285

- Bahman, rejects Zál's conciliatory overtures, v, 286  
 sacks Zál's palace, v, 286  
 pillages Zábulistán, v, 287  
 fights, defeats, and executes Farámarz, v, 288  
 Bishútan intercedes for Zál with, v, 288  
 stops the pillage of Zábul and releases Zál, v, 289  
 quits Zábul by Bishútan's advice, v, 290  
 passes over his son Sásán and nominates Humái and her issue as successors to the throne, v, 291  
 death of, v, 294  
 referred to, v, 310
- Bahman, son of Ardawán, 160, 161, vi, 202, 225, 227, 260  
 made ruler of Párs, vi, 218 and *note*  
 referred to, vi, 222  
 bidden by Ardawán to seek out Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 223  
 wounded and put to flight by Ardshír Pápakán and Tabák, vi, 227  
 escapes to Hind after the defeat of Ardawán, vi, 228  
 urges his sister to poison Ardawán, vi, 259
- Bahman, Iránian magnate, *temp.*  
 Núshírwán, vii, 312; viii, 22
- Bahman, castle of, in Ázarbáiján, 146, ii, 336, 405 *seq.*
- Bahrain, group of islands off the Arabian shore of the Persian Gulf, vi, 330; ix, 68
- Bahrám, genius, iii, 287, 328; vii, 406 and *note*  
 day, viii, 279  
 fatal to Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 337 and *note*, 339 and *note*
- Bahrám, moralist, quoted by Firdausí, ii, 186
- Bahrám (Vardanes), son of Gúdarz and brother of Gív, Iránian hero and Parthian king, 145, 147, 148; ii, 33, 35, 38, 58, 62, 85, 127, 138, 144, 158, 249, 257, 258, 271, 290, 318, 338, 340; iii, 13, 15, 19, 43, 46 *seq.*, 67, 72, 95 *seq.*, 114, 116, 132, 200, 214, 232; iv, 8, 312; vi, 197  
 takes part in the Fight of the Seven Warriors, ii, 107 *seq.*  
 goes with Siyáwush against Afrásiyáb, ii, 226  
 put in command by Siyáwush, ii, 250, 257  
 interviews Farúd, iii, 47 *seq.*  
 Farúd presents his mace to, iii, 50  
 reports his interview with Farúd to Tús, iii, 51  
 tries to save Farúd, iii, 52  
 reproaches the Iránians, iii, 66  
 slays Kabúda, iii, 74  
 rescues the crown of Rív-níz, iii, 94  
 loses his whip, iii, 11, 95  
 becomes fey, iii, 95  
 succours a wounded brother, iii, 97  
 finds his whip, iii, 95  
 loses his horse, iii, 95  
 set on by Turkmans, iii, 98  
 Rúín, iii, 99  
 wounds Rúín, iii, 99  
 interviews Pirán, iii, 99  
 attacked by Tazháv, iii, 101  
 found by Gív, iii, 102  
 death and burial of, iii, 104
- Bahrám, son of Zarasp, Iránian hero, goes with Zarír to Rúm, iv, 360  
 commands the host in Zarír's absence, iv, 360  
 hails Gushtásp as Sháh, iv, 362

- Bahrám, Íránian warrior or king,  
iv, 268
- Bahrám=Ardawán, vi, 197, 210
- Bahrám, son of Pírúz, Íránian  
warrior, *temp.* Bahrám  
Gúr, vii, 85
- Bahrám, father of Shírwí *temp.*  
Núshírwán, vii, 251, 262
- Bahrám, son of Urmuzd, Sásán-  
ian Sháh (Varahran I),  
162, vi, 3  
receives the throne from,  
and is counselled by,  
Urmuzd, vi, 303 *seq.*  
mourns for Urmuzd, vi,  
306
- Reign of, vi, 307 *seq.*  
Note on, vi, 307  
appoints his successor and  
dies, vi, 309
- Mání and, vi, 327
- Bahrám, son of Bahrám, Sásán-  
ian Sháh (Varahran II),  
162, vi, 3, 308  
appointed to succeed his  
father, vi, 309
- Reign of, vi, 310  
Note on, vi, 310  
story told of, vi, 310
- Bahrám, son of Shápúr, Sásán-  
ian Sháh (Varahran IV),  
163, vi, 3, 371
- Reign of, vi, 368  
Note on, vi, 368  
ruler of Kirmán, vi, 368  
title of, vi, 313, 368  
seal of, vi, 368  
Tabari's account of, vi, 368  
daughter of, vi, 369  
resigns the throne to his  
brother, vi, 369  
dies, vi, 369
- Bahrám, son of Siyáwush, 172,  
viii, 75, 163, 245  
reported slain, viii, 128  
returns with captive sor-  
cerer, viii, 128  
speech of, viii, 166  
related to Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 187  
wife of viii, 187
- Bahrám, son of Siyáwush, wife of,  
warns Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 247  
pursues Khusrau Parwíz,  
viii, 233  
besieges Khusrau Parwíz,  
viii, 236  
beguiled by Bandwí, viii,  
236, 245  
returns with Bandwí to  
Bahrám Chúbína, viii,  
238  
blamed by Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 238  
given custody of Bandwí,  
viii, 238  
slain by Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 247
- Bahrám, Íránian general, left in  
charge of host by Khus-  
rau Parwíz, viii, 296
- Bahrám, father, in Persian  
Tabari, of Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 77
- Bahrám, name of, inscribed on  
cup incites Khusrau Par-  
wíz to afflict Rai, viii,  
365 and *note*
- Bahrám Ázarmihán, Íránian  
scribe, 170  
Hurmuzd attempts to  
suborn, viii, 85 *seq.*  
reveals state-secret to Hur-  
muzd, viii, 88  
put to death, viii, 89
- Bahrám Bahrámiyán, Sásánian  
Sháh (Varahran III), 162,  
vi, 3, 316, 324, 334  
Reign of, vi, 313  
Note on, vi, 313  
miscalled "Kirmánsháh,"  
vi, 313, 368  
appoints his son to succeed  
him, vi, 314, 315
- Bahrám Chúbína, son of Gas-  
hasp, marchlord of Rai,  
Persian warrior and usur-  
per, 170-173, i, 14; vi,  
209, 250; viii, 70, 73,  
184, 187, 199, 209, 214,  
215, 343 *seq.*, 352 *seq.*

Bahrám Chúbína—*cont.*

356 *seq.*, 360, 383; ix, 6,  
15, 16, 22, 91, 105  
Romance of, viii, 72 *seq.*,  
187, 191, 304 *note*; ix, 5  
Nöldeke on, viii, 73  
account of, viii, 72  
seller of sheep's heads and,  
viii, 74, 107  
dream of, viii, 75  
withholding of booty by,  
viii, 76, 148  
insult of Hurmuzd to, viii,  
76  
defeat of, in Lazic war, viii,  
76  
sends swords to Hurmuzd,  
viii, 76  
parentage of, viii, 76, 77  
malicious speech about, viii,  
77, 150  
coinage of, viii, 77, 173  
brought to notice of Hur-  
muzd, viii, 98  
described, viii, 98, 206  
identified by Zád Farrukh,  
viii, 99  
sent for by Hurmuzd, viii,  
100  
consulted by Hurmuzd, viii,  
100  
made commander-in-chief,  
viii, 102  
selects his troops, viii, 102  
justifies his method in so  
doing, viii, 104  
receives Rustam's banner  
from Hurmuzd, viii, 105  
Mihrán as recorder from  
Hurmuzd, viii, 106  
marches from Taisafún, viii,  
106  
refuses to be recalled, viii,  
108  
marches to Khúzistán, viii,  
109 and *note*  
hay-seller and, viii, 109  
marches toward Dáma-  
ghán, viii, 109  
parley of, with Faghfúr,  
viii, 112

Bahrám Chúbína, refuses Sáwa's  
offers, viii, 113 *seq.*, 117  
*seq.*  
counselled by Kharrád, viii,  
121  
arrays his host, viii, 122  
prayer of, before battle,  
viii, 123  
encourages the Iránians  
against Sáwa's sorcery,  
*etc.*, viii, 124 *seq.*  
defeats and slays Sáwa, viii,  
126  
doings of, after battle with  
Sáwa, viii, 130  
rewarded by Hurmuzd, viii,  
133  
ordered to attack Parmúda,  
viii, 133  
holds revel in a garden,  
viii, 135  
attacked by and defeats  
Parmúda, viii, 135 *seq.*  
besieges Parmúda in Áwáza,  
viii, 138  
informs Hurmuzd, viii, 138  
negotiates for surrender of  
Áwáza with Parmúda,  
viii, 138 *seq.*  
receives surrender of, and  
insults, Parmúda, viii, 143  
blamed by Kharrád and  
archscribe, viii, 144  
tries to appease Parmúda,  
viii, 145  
has inventory made of the  
wealth in Áwáza, viii, 147  
sends Ízid Cashasp with  
spoil to Irán, viii, 148  
Hurmuzd begins to suspect,  
viii, 151  
advances of, to Khán re-  
jected, viii, 153  
goes to Balkh, viii, 153  
guided by an onager, viii,  
156  
incited to seek the king-  
ship, viii, 158  
change in, viii, 158  
questioned by Kharrád, viii,  
158



Bahrám Chúbína, sends Yalán-sína after Kharrád and archscribe, viii, 159  
 pardons archscribe, viii, 160  
 Luck of, viii, 162  
 renounces allegiance to Hurmuzd, viii, 162  
 intercepts the royal letters, viii, 163  
 consults the chiefs, viii, 163  
 becomes friends with the Khán, viii, 172  
 appoints a prince for Khurásán, *etc.*, viii, 173  
 marches to Rai, viii, 173  
 avenges murder of Áyín Gashasp, viii, 181  
 historical campaign of, against Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 189  
 carline and, viii, 189, 303  
 marches to the Nahrawán, viii, 201  
 spies' report of, to Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 201  
 Khusrau Parwíz marches to meet, viii, 203  
 interview of, with, viii, 204 *seq.*  
 tampers with troops of Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 225  
 combat of, with Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 228  
 arrives at Taisafún, viii, 231  
 sends Bahrám, son of Siyáwush, in pursuit of Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 233  
 blames Bahrám, viii, 238  
 chides, warns and imprisons Bandwí, viii, 238  
 addresses the magnates, viii, 239  
 elected Sháh, viii, 243  
 gives malcontents three days to quit Írán, viii, 244  
 plot against, viii, 245 *seq.*  
 warned, viii, 247  
 slays Bahrám, son of Siyáwush, viii, 247  
 hears of Bandwí's escape, viii, 248

Bahrám Chúbína, deceived by forged letters, viii, 287, 293, 294  
 marches against Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 287  
 goes to Ázar Ábádagán, viii, 288  
 arrays his host, viii, 289  
 fights with and slays Kút, viii, 290  
 sends back corpse of Kút, viii, 291  
 worsts Rúmans, viii, 292  
 "Harvest of," viii, 292  
 charges and routs Khusrau Parwíz' centre, viii, 294  
 fights with Gurdwí, viii, 294  
 goes to fight Khusrau Parwíz and his body-guard, viii, 297  
 leaves Jánfurúz in charge of host, viii, 297  
 puts to flight and pursues Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 298  
 Surúsh saves Khusrau Parwíz from, viii, 299  
 deserted by his chiefs, viii, 302  
 retreats, viii, 302  
 releases Nastúh, viii, 306  
 goes to Rai, viii, 306  
 welcomed by Khán, viii, 316  
 asks oath of Khán, viii, 317  
 counsels Khán to resist Makátúra, viii, 318  
 challenged by Makátúra, viii, 319  
 fight of, with Makátúra, viii, 320  
 Khán sends gifts to, viii, 321  
 asked by Khán's wife to avenge death of her daughter on lion-ape, viii, 324  
 battle of, with lion-ape, viii, 325  
 extradition of, demanded by Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 328  
 urges Khán to make war on Írán, viii, 330  
 sets forth for Írán, viii, 331

Bahrám Chúbína, Kharrád at-  
tempts to prejudice, with  
Khán, viii, 333  
arrives at Marv, viii, 336  
fatal day of, viii, 337, 339  
Kulún seeks interview with,  
viii, 339  
stabs, viii, 340  
sister of, mourns, viii, 340  
dying speech of, viii, 341  
makes Yalán-sína his man-  
datory, viii, 342  
letter of, to Khán, viii, 343  
burial of, viii, 343  
name of, on cup, viii, 365  
and *note*  
assassination of, referred to,  
ix, 4  
Bahrám Gúr, Sásánian Sháh  
(Varahran V), 163-165, i,  
42; vi, 3, 250, 325, 329  
and *note*, 394 *seq.*; vii,  
160, 164, 165, 170 and  
*note*, 174, 178, 187, 334,  
359; viii, 75, 129 and  
*note*; ix, 26, 77  
birth of, vi, 375  
Yazdagird advised by mag-  
nates to choose governor  
for, vi, 376  
put in Munzir's charge, vi,  
372, 378  
goes with Munzir to Yaman,  
vi, 378  
nurses of, vi, 378  
education of, vi, 378 *seq.*  
obtains his tutors' dismissal,  
vi, 380  
makes choice of steeds, vi,  
380  
slave-girls, vi, 381  
goes to the chase with a  
slave-girl, vi, 382  
markmanship of, vi, 383  
*seq.*  
slays his slave-girl, vi, 384  
and *note*  
goes hunting with Nu'mán  
and Munzir, vi, 384  
picture of, hunting, sent to  
Yazdagird, vi, 385

Bahrám Gúr, returns with  
Nu'mán to Yazdagird, vi,  
386  
complains of Yazdagird to  
Munzir, vi, 387  
receives advice and his slave-  
girl from Munzir, vi, 388  
falls into disgrace at court,  
vi, 389  
asks Tainúsh to intercede  
for him, vi, 389  
released and returns to Mun-  
zir, vi, 390  
welcomed by Munzir, vi, 390  
hears of his father's death  
and of the election of  
Khusrau, vi, 395, 396  
claims the kingship and is  
supported by Munzir, vi,  
396 *seq.*  
interview of, with Jawánwí,  
vi, 398  
negotiates with the Írán-  
ians, vi, 401 *seq.*  
Íránians produce examples  
of Yazdagird's cruelty to,  
vi, 404  
addresses the Íránians, vi,  
404  
proposes to decide the ques-  
tion of the kingship by  
ordeal, vi, 405  
promises to rule justly, vi,  
406  
agrees to be the first to face  
the ordeal, vi, 409  
Reign of, 164, vii, 3 *seq.*  
Note on, vii, 3 *seq.*  
length of, vii, 3  
largely legendary, vii, 3  
character of, vii, 3  
resembles James V of Scot-  
land, vii, 3  
accession of, vii, 7  
age of, at, vi, 373  
inaugural measures at,  
vii, 7 *seq.*  
holds eight days' court, vii,  
7 *seq.*  
appoints ministers, vii, 4,  
8, 11

Bahrám Gúr, sends letters to the chiefs, vii, 8  
 pardons his enemies, vii, 9  
 makes festival for three days, vii, 9  
 rewards Nu'mán and Munzir, vii, 10  
 honours Khusrau, vii, 10  
 remits arrears of taxes, vii, 11  
 restores the nobles exiled by Yazdagird to their honours, vii, 11  
 proclamations of, vii, 12, 79, 82  
 persecutes the Christians, vi, 373; vii, 4  
 war of, with Rûm, vii, 4  
 adventures of, 164, vii, 4, 12 *seq.*  
 forbids wine-drinking, vii, 23  
 allows wine-drinking again, vii, 25  
 whip of, vii, 47, 54, 63, 64  
 equipage of, for the chase, vii, 48, 76  
 loses and finds his tughral, vii, 49, 50  
 visit of, to Barzín, vii, 49 *seq.*  
 marries Barzín's daughters, vii, 53  
 hunting-feats of, vi, 383 *seq.*; vii, 54, 55, 77, 80, 81  
 visits a jeweller, vii, 56 *seq.*  
 course of life of, bewailed by Rûzbih, vii, 56  
 many wives of, vii, 56  
 asks and obtains Arzú in marriage, vii, 61 *seq.*  
 visit of, to Farshíward, vii, 68  
 forbids all plundering, vii, 79  
 ear-marks and brands onagers, vii, 81  
 remits the tribute of Barkúh and Jaz, vii, 82  
 visits Baghdád, vii, 83  
 holds revel at Baghdád, vii, 83

Bahrám Gúr reproaches Rûzbih for parsimony, vii, 83  
 reported to be given up to pleasure, vii, 84  
 reproached by his chiefs, vii, 84  
 secret preparations of, against the Khán, vii, 85  
 summons his chiefs, vii, 85  
 levies a host, vii, 86  
 makes Narsí viceroy, vii, 86  
 goes to Ázar Ábádágán, vii, 86, 94, 139  
 march of, to Marv against the Khán, vii, 89  
 defeats the Khán at Kashmihán, vii, 4, 5, 90, 170  
*note*  
 marches on Bukhárá, vii, 90  
 defeats the Turkmans, vii, 91  
 grants peace to the Turkmans, vii, 91  
 boundary pillar of, vii, 92, 160, 161, 164  
 makes Shahrá ruler of Túrán, vii, 92  
 goes to Istakhr, vii, 95  
 makes gifts of treasure, vii, 95, 96  
 deposits the Khán's crown in a Fire-temple, vii, 95  
 goes to Taisafún, vii, 95  
 welcomed by Narsí and the chiefs, vii, 96  
 remits taxes for seven years, vii, 5, 97  
 happiness of the world under, vii, 99  
 bestows Khurásán on Narsí, vii, 99  
 inquires about Cæsar's envoy, vii, 100  
 gives audience to Cæsar's envoy, vii, 101  
 Cæsar's questions to, vii, 102  
 parting gifts of, to Cæsar's envoy, vii, 106  
 addresses the archmagés, vii, 106

- Bahrám Gúr, wazír complains of Shangul to, vii, 109  
 writes to Shangul, vii, 110.  
 visit of, to Hind, vii, 5, 112 *seq.*  
   motive of, vii, 5  
   fabulous, vii, 6  
 bears his own letter to Hind, vii, 112  
 audience of, with Shangul, vii, 112  
 entertained by Shangul, vii, 116  
 wrestles before Shangul, vii, 117  
 displays his marksmanship before Shangul, vii, 118  
 calls himself Barzwí, vii, 121  
 slays monsters, vii, 121 *seq.*  
 offered a daughter and great advancement by Shangul, vii, 127  
 takes to wife one of Shangul's daughters, vii, 128  
 receives an invitation from Faghfúr, vii, 129  
 reply of, vii, 130  
 tells Sapínúd of his wish to quit Hind, vii, 131  
 meets some Iránian merchants and pledges them to secrecy, vii, 133  
 feigns sickness, vii, 134  
 escapes with Sapínúd, vii, 134  
 reproached by Shangul, vii, 135  
 makes a league with Shangul, vii, 137  
 welcome of, on his return, vii, 137  
 addresses the nobles, vii, 138  
 praised by the nobles, vii, 139  
 makes a new treaty with Shangul, vii, 140  
 entertains Shangul and seven other kings, vii, 140 *seq.*
- Bahrám Gúr, appointed Shangul's heir, vii, 143  
 parting gifts of, to Shangul, vii, 144  
 takes account of his treasures, vii, 144  
 term of life of, foretold by the astrologers, vii, 144  
 resolves to levy no more taxes, vii, 145  
 unsuccessful attempts of, to benefit his subjects, vii, 146 *seq.*  
 Gipsies introduced into Irán by, vii, 6, 149  
 appoints Yazdagird his successor, vii, 150  
 death of, vii, 6, 150  
 Firdausí's reflections on, vii, 150, 151  
 mourning for, vii, 151  
 Bahrám-Gushnasp, father, in Arabic Tabarí, of Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 77  
 Bahrám Tal, viii, 138 and *note*  
 Baidá (White), a town in Párs a few miles north of Shíráz, not to be confounded with the stronghold known as "White Castle" further north, i, 236; vi, 198 and *note*, 199  
 Baigand, city and fortress (Kuhandizh ?) between Bukhára and the Oxus, vii, 176  
 Afrásiyáb encamps at, iv, 151  
   marches from, iv, 154  
 Máhwí encamps at, ix, 118  
 Baisinghar Khán, grandson of Tímúr the Lame, life of Firdausí by, i, 23  
   edition of Sháhnáma of, i, 23  
   preface to, i, 67  
 Baitu'l Mukaddas (Gang-i-Dizhukht), Zakhák's capital (Babylon ?), also an Arab name for Jerusalem, i, 161

Baitu'l Harám, the Kaaba *q.v.*,  
vi, 119, 121  
Báj, Zoroastrian system of pray-  
ing, i, 80  
Bakhtagán, father of Búzurj-  
míhr, vii, 279  
Baku, town on the peninsula of  
Apsheron on the western  
shores of the Caspian and  
a chief centre of the  
petroleum industry, i, 58  
*note*  
Bakyír, mountain where Afrá-  
siyáb had a palace, iv, 136  
Balaam, prophet, v, 15  
Bal'amí, Abú 'Alí Muhammad  
al-, (died A.D. 996),  
Sámánid minister and  
compiler of the Persian  
version of Tabarí's An-  
nals, vii, 5  
Balas (Balásh *q.v.*), Sásánian  
Sháh, vii, 170 *seq.*  
Balásh, king of Kirmán, slain by  
Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 205  
Balásh (Balas), Sásánian Sháh,  
166, vi, 3  
appointed regent by Pírúz,  
vii, 164  
hears of the overthrow of  
Pírúz, vii, 169  
Reign of, vii, 170 *seq.*  
Note on, vii, 170  
character of, vii, 171  
introduces public baths, vii,  
171  
end of, vii, 171  
title of, vii, 171  
accession of, vii, 171  
Súfarai's letter to, vii, 173  
welcomes Súfarai on his  
return from Túrán, vii,  
181  
dethroned, vii, 182  
Balkh, city in northern Afgháni-  
stán, 154, 155, ii, 101, 228  
231, 242, 246, 249; iii,  
153, 192; iv, 19, 20, 65,  
156, 157, 255; v, 18, 20,  
29, 31, 33, 41, 48, 73, 86,  
87, 91, 104, 171, 255;

Balkh—*cont*

vii, 94, 331, 359, 384;  
viii, 22, 74, 95, 153, 159,  
161, 173; ix, 116  
ancient seat of Aryan civili-  
zation, i, 7  
situated on ancient trade-  
route, i, 57  
seat of the Magi, i, 60 *seq.*  
Zoroaster's successful evan-  
gel at, i, 61; v, 18  
Zoroaster slain at, i, 61 v,  
92, 93  
rhyme-word, Firdausi's dif-  
ficulty with, i, 74  
Sháhnáma, scene of, shifted  
to, ii, 9.; iv, 317  
Siyáwush defeats Garsíwaz  
at, and takes, ii, 229  
Luhrásp makes, his capital,  
iv, 713  
becomes a devotee at, v,  
31  
Kuhram sent by Arjásp to  
attack, v, 90  
stormed, v, 92, 93  
Luhrásp slain at, v, 91, 93  
spoil of, sent away by  
Arjásp, v, 108  
Asfandiyár quits, to invade  
Túrán, v, 120  
aphorist of, viii, 221  
bestowed by Máhwí on his  
son, ix, 115  
Balúch, Balúchistán (Gedrosia,  
Makrán), country, 167, ii,  
80, 226; iii, 34; iv, 136;  
vi, 12, 70; vii, 340  
Ardshír Pápakán's ill suc-  
cess against, vii, 242  
Núshírwán conquers, vii, 242  
becomes prosperous, vii, 362  
Balúchís, people, vii, 241 *seq.*  
ravages of, vii, 217, 241  
chastised by Núshírwán, vii,  
242  
Bálwí, Iránian noble, 172, viii,  
257, *seq.*  
deceived by Cæsar's talis-  
man, viii, 273

- Fálwí, praised by Caesar, viii, 279  
     receives Chách, viii, 314  
 Bámdát, father of Mazdak, vii, 188  
 Bámiyán, city in Afghánistán, north of the Kuh-i-Baba mountains and famous for its Buddhist remains, iv, 65  
 Banák, Iránian chief, *temp.* Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 202  
 Bandáwa, Sindian chief, defeated by Sikandar, vi, 175  
 Band-i-Kaisar, dam at Shúsh-tar, vi, 295  
 Bandwí, Iránian noble *temp.* Kubád, vii, 207  
 Bandwí, maternal uncle of Khusrau Parwíz, 171-173, viii, 200, 202, 204 *seq.*, 224, 225, 227, 231, 234, 245 *seq.*, 289, 296, 298, 356, 357; ix, 4  
     imprisonment of, viii, 77, 176  
     Gustaham and, escape and revolt, viii, 182  
     referred to, viii, 189  
     put to death, viii, 191, 355  
     accompanies Khusrau Parwíz in his flight, viii, 231  
     turns back and murders Hurmuzd, viii, 232  
     rejoins Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 233  
     promises to save Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 234  
     disguises himself as Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 235  
     beguiles Bahrám, son of Siyáwush, viii, 236, 245  
     imprisoned by Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 238  
 Bandwí, Bahrám Chúbína hears of escape of, viii, 248  
     entertained by Mausíl, viii, 249  
     goes with Mausíl to meet Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 282  
     Bahrám Chúbína writes to, viii, 285  
 Bandwí, causes defection of Bahrám Chúbína's chiefs, viii, 302  
     insults of, to Niyátús, viii, 309, 310  
     reconciled to Niyátús, viii, 311  
     minister of Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 313  
     adherents of, beheaded, viii, 370  
     execution of, referred to, ix, 16, 104  
 Baní Tayy, Arab tribe, viii, 188  
 Banquets, the Seven, of Núshirwán, 168. *See* Núshirwán.  
 Bánúgashasp, daughter of Rustam and wife of Gív, ii, 4  
     stays with Rustam while Gív seeks Kai Khusrau, ii, 365  
     suits of, ii, 383, 384  
     rejoins Gív, ii, 395  
 Bár, mountain-range in Khurásán, v, 30  
 Bár, treasure, viii, 406 and *note*  
 Baráhám, a Jew, 164, vii, 13  
     entertains Bahrám Gúr scurvily, vii, 16 *seq.*  
     goods of, confiscated, vii, 20  
 Bárbad, minstrel, 175, viii, 396 *seq.*, 406, ix, 29 and *note*  
     supersedes Sarkash, viii, 399  
     visits Khusrau Parwíz in prison, ix, 29  
     lament of, ix, 30  
 Barbar, Barbaristán, town and country (British Somaliland), 143, ii, 82 *seq.*, 90, 93, 98; iii, 207, 269; iv, 136, 148; vi, 114; vii, 327; viii, 381  
     identification of, ii, 79  
     king of, ii, 83, 94, 95  
     taken prisoner by Guráza, ii, 97  
     sends embassy to Gush-tásp, v, 75

- Barda', city in Arrán *q.v.*, now in ruins, on the Tharthúr a tributary of the Kur, iv, 147; vii, 341; viii, 99, 100, 184, 222, 226; ix, 15  
Afrásiyáb takes refuge in a cave near, iv, 259
- Bardí. *See* Baidá.
- Barkúh, city between Istakhr and Yazd, vii, 79, 80  
tribute of, remitted by Bah-rám Gúr, vii, 82
- Barmáiún (Purmáya *q.v.*), brother of Faridún, i, 90, 91
- Bármán, son of Wísa, Túránian hero, 142, 144, 151, i, 92, 342; ii, 18, 129, 130, 150, 349; iii, 79, 210; iv, 149  
spies out the Íránian host, i, 346  
challenges the Íránians to single combat and slays Kubád, i, 347  
rewarded by Afrásiyáb, i, 348  
besieges Gazhdaham in White Castle, i, 354  
defeated and slain by Káran, i, 354  
revival of, in legend, ii, 119  
marches on Írán, ii, 228  
defeated by Siyáwush, ii, 229  
chosen to fight Ruhhám, iv, 97  
slain by Ruhhám, iv, 102
- Barrier, Alexander's (Sikandar's), in the Caucasus, 160, i, 16, vi, 189, 249  
legend of, vi, 78  
site of, vi, 79  
described, vi, 164
- Barsaentes, satrap, vi, 32  
murderer of Darius Codomanus, vi, 32  
executed, vi, 32
- Barsám, general of Bízhan, ix, 97, 117  
marches on Marv, ix, 97, 116  
Máhwí's conduct to, ix, 117
- Barám, pursues and overtakes Máhwí, ix, 118  
captures Máhwí, ix, 119
- Barsam, the sacred twigs, implement in Zoroastrian religious ceremonial, i, 80
- Barsine (Stateira), eldest daughter of Darius Codomanus, vi, 33  
marries Alexander the Great, vi, 33
- Barta, Íránian hero, 151, iii, 25, 92; iv, 149  
chosen to fight with Kuhram, iv, 97  
slays Kuhram, iv, 105
- Bartás, region in Turkistán, ix, 19
- Barzín, sacred Fire and Fire-temple on the Binalúd Kuh, south west of Tús and Mashad in Khurásán, i, 237; ii, 107; vi, 391; viii, 216  
Íránians worship at, vi, 400
- Barzín, Fire-temple built by Luhrásp at Balkh, iv, 318
- Barzín, Íránian hero, i, 365; ii, 12, 22, 73; iii, 25, 127, 273
- Barzín, father of Bihzád, *temp.* Yazdagird son of Shápúr, vi, 395
- Barzín, Íránian noble, *temp.* Bahrám Gúr, 164  
visited by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 49  
entertains Bahrám Gúr, vii, 50 *seq.*  
gives his daughters in marriage to Bahrám Gúr, 164, vii, 53
- Barzín, father of Rád and Dád, *temp.* Bahrám Gúr, vii, 86
- Barzín, father of Ustád, *temp.* Núshírwán, vii, 251
- Barzín, father of Shádán, vii, 382, 423
- Barzín, bower of, vii, 83
- Barzín, general of Núshírwán, viii, 17

- Barzin, father of Kharrád, 171-173, viii, 74, 76, 190, 205 and *passim*, ix, 4, 9, 12, 27
- Barzín, father of Jahn, viii, 391
- Barzví, nonce-name assumed by Bahrám Gúr in Hind, vii, 121, 134
- Barzví, physician and sage, *temp.* Núshírwán, 169, vii, 383  
goes on a mission to Hind, vii, 424  
consults a sage, vii, 427  
hears of the book of Kallá and Dimna (Fables of Bidpai), and procures it for Núshírwán, vii, 427, 428  
translates the above into Pahlaví, vii, 382, 428  
asks boon of Núshírwán, vii, 429
- Basra (Bassora), city on the Shatt-el-Arab, ix, 68, 69  
founded by 'Umar, ix, 67
- Bastám, city near Dámaghán on the road to Nishápúr, vii, 357
- Bástán-náma (Khudái - náma), Firdausí's chief authority, v, 24, 27, 261; vi, 17, 84  
traditional origin of, i, 67  
discussed, i, 68  
translated into Arabic by Ibn Mukaffá', vi, 16, 373  
modern Persian, i, 67 *seq.*; vii, 382
- Bastavairi, Bastvar (Nastúr *q.v.*), v, 12, 25
- Bátarún (Marcian), Rúman general, viii, 41, 47, 52
- Baths, public, introduction of, by Balásh, vii, 171
- Battle of the Twelve Rukhs, 151, iv, 7 *seq.*, v, 29  
Firdausí's reflections on, iv, 98, 106  
Eleven Rukhs, 151, iv, 88  
arranged by Gúdarz and Pírán, iv, 95 *seq.*  
of the Bridge, ix, 5, 67
- Battlestead=Brazen Hold, v, 121
- Bazánúsh (Valerian, *q.v.*), 161  
defeat of, and capture by, Shápúr son of Ardshír, vi, 294, 295  
single combat of, with Garshásp, vi, 297  
bridge built by, at Shúsh-tar, vi, 298
- Bazánúsh (Jovian *q.v.*), 162, 163, vi, 324, 326  
elected Emperor, vi, 353  
sues for peace, vi, 353  
accepts Shápúr's terms, vi, 355
- Bazh, suburb of Tús, i, 38
- Bázrangí, dynasty of Tribal kings, vi, 198
- Bázúr, Túránian warlock, iii, 128  
uses magic against the Iránians, iii, 128  
wounded by Ruhhám, iii, 129
- Beas (Hyphasis), easternmost of the rivers of the Punjáb, vi, 64
- Bedouins, i, 135, 179  
desert of the, iv, 148  
commanded by Zahr in Kai Khusráu's host, iv, 148
- Bel, Babylonian god, v, 293  
temple of, v, 293
- Belisarius, Roman general (A.D. 505-565), vii, 186, 187, 217, 218
- Berber, race in northern Africa, vi, 73
- Berbera, trading-station in the Gulf of Aden, ii, 79
- Berlin, viii, 192
- Berozias, Barzví *q.v.*, vii, 383
- Bessus, satrap, *temp.* Alexander the Great, vi, 32  
assumes royal state in Bactria, vi, 32  
executed, vi, 32
- Bhíma, one of the five Pándavaś, iv, 138, 139
- Bhután, Indian kingdom, between Assam and Thibet, vi, 81



- Bibliotheca*, of Diodorus, v, 293
- Bíd, a div, ii, 44, 54, 55, 93  
slain, ii, 59, 64; iii, 256;  
iv, 296; v, 204
- Bídád, city of Cannibals in the  
vicinity of Sughd, iii, 244  
*seq.*  
meaning of, iii, 244 *note*  
stormed by Rustam, iii, 246
- Bídrafsh (Vidrafsh), Túránian  
hero, 155, v, 24, 25, 41,  
51, 52, 62 *seq.*  
goes as envoy to Gushtásp,  
v, 37, 40 *seq.*  
returns with Gushtásp's  
answer, v, 44  
receives banner from Ar-  
jásp, v, 46  
commands one wing, v, 56  
volunteers to fight Zarír, v,  
62  
slays Zarír, v, 63  
fights Nastúr, v, 70  
slain by Asfandiyár, v, 70  
head of, presented to Gush-  
tásp, v, 71
- Bidpai, Indian sage, vii, 383
- Fables of (Book of Kalíla  
and Dimna), brought to  
Persia, 169, vii, 213, 382
- Bih Áfríd, daughter of Gush-  
tásp, ii, 3; v, 22  
taken captive by the Turk-  
mans, v, 93, 94, 100  
goes with Humái to draw  
water and meets As-  
fandiyár, v, 147  
escapes from Arjásp's  
palace, v, 153  
laments over Asfandiyár, v,  
252  
reproaches Gushtásp, v, 254
- Biháfrídh, ancestor of Ardshír  
Pápakán, vi, 200
- Bih Ardshír, Seleucia *q.v.* as  
rebuilt by Ardshír Pápa-  
kán, vi, 254, 291 *note*,  
viii, 194, 196
- Bihbihán, town near the left  
bank of the Táb river in  
Párs, vii, 188
- Bihisht (Paradise), name of the  
country round Gang, iv,  
195
- Bihistún. *See* Bistún.
- Bihrúz, a scribe *temp.* Bahrá-  
m Gúr, vii, 71 *seq.*  
makes an inventory of the  
goods of the miser  
Farshíward, vii, 72
- Bihzád ("well bred"), the horse  
of Siyáwush and sub-  
sequently of Kai Khus-  
rau, 146, ii, 391; iv, 172,  
303  
Siyáwush's last charge to,  
ii, 312  
Farangís instructs Kai  
Khusrau how to obtain,  
ii, 374 *seq.*
- Bihzád, Gushtásp's horse, v, 56,  
69
- Bihzád, Íránian chief, *temp.*  
Yazdagird son of Shápúr,  
vi, 395; vii, 85 (?)
- Bihzád, Íránian chief, *temp.*  
Kubád son of Pírúz, vii,  
207
- Binalúd, mountain-range, west  
of Mashhad, north of  
Nishápúr, v, 29
- Birds, Sikandar holds converse  
with, 160, vi, 160
- Birka-i-Ardshír, city in Párs  
founded by Ardshír Pápa-  
kán, vi, 290 and *note*
- Birmáya, cow, i, 151  
supplies the infant Farídún  
with milk, i, 151  
slain by Zahhák, i, 152, 153,  
162
- Birthmark, characteristic of  
Kaian race, ii, 372; iii,  
49 and *note*  
described, ii, 372; iii, 49  
Siyáwush's, iii, 49  
Kai Khusrau's, ii, 372; iii,  
49 and *note*  
Farúd's, iii, 49
- Bisá (Fasá, Pasá, city south of  
Lake Bakhtigán in Párs,  
vii, 89 ?)

- Bishop *or* prelate *q.v.*, iv, 341, 348  
 as militarist, i, 373, 378;  
 iv, 197; v, 306, vi, 352  
 advises Caesar, iv, 330  
 Núshzád's last requests to,  
 vii, 275
- Bishútan (Peshó-tanu), brother  
 of Asfandiyár, 156, 157,  
 v, 66, 117, 178, 179, 182,  
 195, 216, 223, 244 *seq.*,  
 249 *seq.*, 261, 288 *seq.*  
 an immortal, v, 12, 19  
 birth of, v, 32  
 commands the host during  
 Asfandiyár's absence in  
 the Seven Stages, v, 122,  
 124, 126, 129, 132, 144,  
 150  
 Asfandiyár praised by the  
 host and, v, 123, 125, 131,  
 133  
 revives Asfandiyár after his  
 encounter with the dragon  
 v, 127  
 prays for deliverance from  
 the snow, v, 138  
 Asfandiyár and, consult, v,  
 143  
 sees Asfandiyár's signal and  
 approaches the Brazen  
 Hold, v, 150  
 passes himself off as Asfan-  
 diyár, v, 143, 151, 152  
 joined by Asfandiyár, v,  
 155  
 advises Asfandiyár, v, 179  
 Asfandiyár holds talk about  
 Rustam with, v, 192  
 advises Asfandiyár to main-  
 tain friendly relations  
 with Rustam, v, 196, 217  
 Rustam served with un-  
 tempered wine by, v, 211  
 despair of, at the situation  
 between Rustam and  
 Asfandiyár, v, 218  
 laments for Núsh Ázar and  
 Mihr-i-Núsh, v, 232  
 Asfandiyár talks of the  
 fight with Rustam to, v,  
 240
- Bishútan, hears of Asfandiyár's  
 overthrow and laments  
 for him, v, 244  
 Rustam bewails Asfandiyár  
 to, v, 246  
 Asfandiyár's last charge to,  
 v, 249  
 heads Asfandiyár's funeral  
 train, v, 251  
 displays the corpse of As-  
 fandiyár, v, 253  
 reproaches Gushtásp, v, 253  
 Jámásp, v, 254  
 consoles Katáyún, v, 255  
 supports Rustam's over-  
 tures to Gushtásp, v, 257  
 intended by Gushtásp to be  
 Bahman's minister, v, 279  
 intercedes for Zál, v, 288  
 intercession of, accepted, v,  
 289  
 counsels Bahman to quit  
 Zábul, v, 290
- Bistám (Gustaham *q.v.*), viii, 255  
 and *note*, 256
- Bístún (Bagistana *i.e.* "Place of  
 God," Behistún, Bisi-  
 tún), a lofty rock a few  
 miles east of Kirmánsháh  
 and famous for its in-  
 scriptions, i, 379; ii, 128;  
 iii, 12, 184, 350; iv, 190;  
 v, 56, 184; vii, 61, 363;  
 viii, 209  
 inscription of Darius Hys-  
 taspis at, i, 6; v, 11  
 Gotarzes at, iii, 9, 11  
 = Zál's white elephant, i, 328  
 = Rustam, v, 229
- Bíwarasp (Zahhák), i, 72, 144  
 meaning of, i, 135
- Bíward, Túránian hero, iii, 161  
 comes to aid Pírán, iii, 152
- Bíward, Íránian chief *temp.*  
 Yazdagird son of Shápúr,  
 vi, 395
- Bízhan, Íránian hero, son of Giv,  
 147, 150-152, ii, 4, 366  
 and *note*; ii, 4, 366 and  
*note*; iii, 20, 45, 67, 76  
*seq.*, 81, 92, 101, 115, 121,

Bízhan—*cont.*

129, 130, 133, 139, 141,  
157 *seq.*, 211, 234, 247,  
248, 253, 259, 264, 271,  
284 *seq.*, 289, 330 *seq.*, 337  
*seq.*, 349, 350, 352 *seq.*;  
iv, 7, 13, 26 *seq.*, 56, 77,  
88, 91, 102, 123 *seq.*, 147,  
292; vi, 194  
favourite with the poet, iv, 8  
parentage of, iii, 324  
friendship of, with Gusta-  
ham the son of Gazhdaham,  
iii, 15  
relations of, with Gív, iii, 15  
undertakes to slay Paláshán,  
iii, 26  
to carry off the crown  
and handmaid of Tazháv,  
iii, 27  
swears to avenge Zarásp, iii,  
59  
borrows a steed from  
Gustaham, iii, 59  
the mail of Siyáwush,  
iii, 60, 69  
worsts Farúd, iii, 62  
praises Farúd to Tús, iii, 62  
fights with Farúd, iii, 64  
Paláshán, iii, 70  
pursues Tazháv, iii, 77  
takes Ispanwí captive, iii, 78  
prowess of, with Káwa's  
standard, iii, 93  
shares his steed with Gusta-  
ham, iii, 95  
goes with Gív in quest of  
Bahrám, iii, 102  
attacks Bídád, iii, 244  
goes to summon Rustam,  
iii, 245  
worsted by Púládwand, iii,  
258  
Story of, and Manízha, 150,  
iii, 12, 285 *seq.*  
historical basis of, iii, 11  
Mohl on, iii, 285  
Firdausí on, iii, 287  
referred to, viii, 72  
volunteers to go to the help  
of the Irmánians, iii, 291

Bízhan, goes to Iimán with  
Gurgín, iii, 292  
destroys the wild boars, iii,  
293  
envied by Gurgín, iii, 294  
steed of, iii, 296, 302, 313  
interview of, with Manízha's  
nurse, iii, 297  
visits Manízha, iii, 298  
drugged, iii, 299  
wakes in Afrásiyáb's palace,  
iii, 300  
holds revel with Manízha,  
iii, 300  
discovered by Garsíwaz, iii,  
302  
taken before Afrásiyáb, iii,  
303  
sentenced to death, iii, 304  
lament of, iii, 305  
imprisoned, iii, 309; v, 116  
searched for by Gurgín,  
iii, 310  
receives Rustam's ring, iii,  
340  
Rustam's conditions of re-  
lease for, iii, 345  
released, iii, 346  
pardons Gurgín, iii, 346  
joins in attack on Afrá-  
siyáb's palace, iii, 347  
presented to Kai Khúsráw  
by Rustam, iii, 354  
holds converse with Kai  
Khusrau, iii, 356  
desires to fight Húmán, iv,  
39  
asks Gív to lend him the  
mail of Siyáwush, iv, 40  
seeks Gúdarz' permission to  
fight Húmán, iv, 41  
receives the mail of Siyá-  
wush from Gív, iv, 45  
parleys with Húmán, iv,  
45  
returns after the fight in  
Húmán's armour, iv 51,  
defeats night-attack and  
slays Nastíhan, iv, 54  
attacks with Gív Pírán's  
centre, iv, 83

- Bízhan, fights with Farshíward, iv, 87  
 chosen to fight with Rúín, iv, 97  
 slays Rúín, iv, 103  
 asks Gúdarz for help for Gustaham, iv, 117  
 rescues Gustaham, iv, 124 *seq.*, 132  
 brings back the corpses of Lahhák and Farshíward, iv, 126, 132  
 Kai Khusrau remonstrated with by, and other nobles, for refusing audience, iv, 275  
 Kai Khusrau gives audience to, and other nobles, iv, 283 *seq.*  
 Kai Khusrau's gift to iv, 295  
 brings Luhrásp before Kai Khusrau, iv, 300  
 sets out with Kai Khusrau on his pilgrimage, iv, 306  
 refuses to turn back when bidden by Kai Khusrau, iv, 307  
 Kai Khusrau farewells and warns, and his comrades, iv, 308  
 disappears and is sought in vain by, and his comrades, iv, 308  
 end of, iv, 309  
 Gúdarz' grief for, iv, 310, 312  
 sons of, go with Zarír to Rúm, iv, 360  
 hail Gushtásp as Sháh, iv, 362  
 Bízhan, Ashkánian king, vi, 197, 210  
 Bízhan, Khán of Turks, 176, ix, 70, 96  
 Máhwí writes to, ix, 96  
 consults his minister, ix, 97  
 sends troops to Marv, ix, 97  
 Máhwí makes war on, ix, 115  
 marches against Máhwí, ix, 117
- Bizhan, Khán of Turks, lays ambush for Máhwí, ix, 118  
 sends Barsám in pursuit of Máhwí, ix, 118  
 hears of Máhwí's capture, ix, 119  
 puts Máhwí to death, ix, 120  
 goes mad and kills himself, ix, 120, 121  
 Black Dív. *See* Dív.  
 horse, Gushtásp's, v, 18  
 cured by Zarduhsht, v, 18  
 Stone, meteorite built into the wall of the Kaaba at Mecca, ii, 163 and *note*, vi, 65  
 Blest, Country of the, vi, 74, 76  
 Boars, wild, devastate Irnán, iii, 290  
 slain by Bízhan, iii, 293  
*Bombyx Mori*. *See* Silk.  
 Book of Kings, Firdausi's Sháh-náma, i, 43  
 Indication and Revision, Mas'údí's, vi, 252  
 quoted, vi, 252  
 Boot, golden. *See* Golden.  
 Borysthenes, river (Dnieper *q.v.*), iii, 191  
 Boulder of the Dív Akwán, iii, 271, 343 *seq.*, 347  
 Rustam carried off on, iii, 276  
 flung into the sea with, iii, 278  
 raised from the sea, iii, 309  
 used to cover Bízhan's prison, iii, 309  
 removed from pit's mouth by Rustam iii, 345  
 Boundary-pillar, Bahráam Gúr's, vii, 92, 160, 161, 164  
 Bowl, the full, symbolism of, vi, 63  
 Brabantio, his warning to Othello, vi, 324  
 Brádrók-résh, a Karap, v, 15  
 slayer of Zarduhsht, v, 15  
 Brahman, Hindu priest, iii, 29;  
 iv, 50; v, 207, vii, 425;  
 ix, 21

- Brahmans (Gymnosophistæ), 159  
     vi, 64  
     Palladius on, vi, 61  
     country of, vi, 143, 147  
     hear of Sikandar's coming  
     and write to him, vi,  
     143  
     Sikandar's interview with,  
     vi, 67, 143 *seq.*  
     described, vi, 144  
     reply to Sikandar's ques-  
     tions, vi, 144 *seq.*  
     Sikandar quits, vi, 147  
 Brahmanism supersedes Budd-  
   hism in eastern Irán, i, 16  
 Brains, human, prescribed to  
   Zahhák by Iblís, i, 139,  
   146  
 Bramble-grubber, 164. *See*  
   Diláfrúz.  
 Brand-mark, iii, 291  
   of Káuś, iii, 291  
 Brazen Hold, the 156, v, 116,  
   117, 119 *seq.*, 159, 197,  
   206, 255  
   route to, v, 120, 135  
   described, v, 121, 135, 141  
 Asfandiyár's stratagem for  
   taking, v, 116, 143  
   surprised from within by  
   Asfandiyár, v, 152 *seq.*  
   left in charge of Sáwa, v,  
   154  
 Arjasp's head thrown from  
   the ramparts of, v, 157  
 Asfandiyár destroys, v, 162  
   referred to, viii, 171  
 Bride, the, one of the Kai Káuś'  
   treasures, iv, 295  
   given by Kai Khusráu to  
   Gív, Zál, and Rustam, iv,  
   295  
 Brides of the Treasure, Genii  
   that watch over secret  
   hoards, vi, 250  
 Bridge, Battle of the, ix, 5, 67  
 Browning, Robert, his poem of  
   "The Glove," vi, 384  
 Bucephala, city founded by  
   Alexander the Great, vi,  
   18  
 Bucephalus, horse of Alexander  
   the Great, vi, 18  
   birth of, vi, 26  
   a mare (Ethiopic version),  
   vi, 18  
   offered by Darius to Porus,  
   vi, 31  
   death of, vi, 18, 64  
   city built by Alexander in  
   memory of, vi, 18  
 Buddha, birth stories of, vii, 383  
 Buddhism, in eastern Irán and  
   Kábulistán, i, 15  
   superseded by Brahman-  
   ism, i, 16  
   regarded as idolatrous by  
   Zoroastrians, i, 16  
 Buddhist saints, story of two, vi,  
   63  
 Budge, Dr. E. A. Wallis, his  
   editions of the Syriac  
   and Ethiopic versions of  
   the Pseudo-Callisthenes,  
   vi, 14, 17 *note*  
 Budini, race, vi, 73  
 Búiti, demon, assails Zarduhsht  
   i, 62; v, 17  
 Bukhára, city on the Zarafshán  
   river in the province of  
   Sughd, ii, 241; iv, 65;  
   vii, 331, 348, 359, 384;  
   ix, 97, 115, 117  
   Kurákhán sent to, iv, 154  
   Afrásiyáb joins Kurákhán  
   at, iv, 186  
   Fire-temple built by Túr at,  
   iv, 225  
   Bahráw Gúr attacks, vii, 90  
   receives tribute from, vii,  
   94  
 Bukhtakán. *See* Bakhtagán.  
 Bulghár (Bulgaria), viii, 406  
 Bull, mythological, i, 71; ii,  
   407; vii, 245  
   -fish, ii, 128  
 Bundahish, Pahlaví text, i, 91,  
   92, 117, 125, 131, 235,  
   236, 337 *note*, 338, 369;  
   ii, 3 *note*, 11, 26, 81, 118,  
   189  
   meaning of, i, 70 *note*

- Eundahi-h, account of Creation  
     in, i, 117  
 Búráb, court-farrier to Caesar,  
     iv, 326  
     refuses to employ Gushtásp,  
     iv, 327  
 Buráza, minister under Yazda-  
     gird son of Shápúr, vii, 4  
 Burial-place of Rustam's race,  
     the scene of the battle be-  
     tween Bahman and Fará-  
     marz, v, 287  
 Burjak and Burjátúr, vi, 207.  
     *See* Youths, the two.  
 Burjásp, Túránian hero, iv, 26  
     commands the left wing, iv,  
     26  
 Burns, quoted, viii, 3  
 Burrus, Prætorian prefect *temp.*  
     Nero, vii, 279  
 Burzmihir, Íránian warrior, vii,  
     86  
     bears Narsi's letter to Bah-  
     rám Gúr, vii, 94  
 Burzmihir, scribe, viii, 81, 87, 313  
     =Búzurjmihir (?) *q.v.*, viii,  
     71  
 Burzúyalá, Túránian hero, iv,  
     182  
     fights and flees from Kai  
     Khusrau, iv, 183  
 Búsipás, nonce name used by  
     Húmán when parleying  
     with Rustam, iii, 198  
 Bust, city in Sístán, situated at  
     the junction of the Kan-  
     dahár and Helmund  
     rivers, i, 252; iv, 65; v,  
     173, 277, 287; vi, 175;  
     vii, 173, 395; ix, 89  
     stream of, i, 252  
 Buzgúsh, name of tribe, ii, 55  
     and *note*, iii, 207  
 Búzurjmihir, chief counsellor of  
     Núshírwán in Íránian  
     tradition and famous for  
     his wisdom, 167-170, i,  
     27; v, 261; vii, 5; viii,  
     3 *seq.*, 67 *seq.*  
     associated with the Persian  
     Wisdom-literature, vii, 278  
 Búzurjmihir, a semi-mythical  
     personage, vii, 280  
     found by Azád Sarv at Marv,  
     vii, 283  
     undertakes to interpret  
     Núshírwán's dream vii,  
     283  
     goes with Azád Sarv to  
     court, vii, 283  
     adventure of, with a snake,  
     vii, 284  
     interprets Núshírwán's  
     dream, vii, 284  
     rewarded and honoured by  
     Núshírwán, vii, 286, 289,  
     304, 311, 315, 388  
     accomplishments of, vii, 286  
     discourses of, at the Seven  
     Banquets of Núshírwán,  
     vii, 287 *seq.*  
     on fate and fortune, vii, 291  
     on the attainment of great-  
     ness, vii, 291, 296  
     on what is worthiest, vii,  
     291  
     on sages, vii, 288, 291, 292,  
     294, 296 *seq.*, 309  
     on fools, vii, 297, 298, 306  
     on conduct, vii, 288, 291  
     *seq.*, 299, 309  
     on kings, vii, 290, 294, 295,  
     301, 312  
     on the wise administrator,  
     vii, 294  
     on sons, vii, 295, 303, 311.  
     on riches and poverty, vii,  
     295  
     questioned by Ardshír and  
     Yazdagird, vii, 308  
     on scribes, i, 27; vii, 311  
     on loyalty, vii, 312  
     discourse of, vii, 366  
     questioned by Núshírwán,  
     vii, 367 *seq.*  
     expounds the game of chess,  
     vii, 380, 388  
     invents the game of nard,  
     vii, 381, 389  
     welcomed on his return from  
     Hind by Núshírwán, vii,  
     393

Búzurjmihr, goes hunting with,  
and is suspected of theft  
by, Núshírwán, viii, 4  
disgraced by Núshírwán,  
viii, 5  
instructs Núshírwán's page,  
viii, 5  
refuses to admit himself in  
the wrong, viii, 6 *seq.*  
treated with increasing  
rigour, viii, 7, 8  
released, viii, 9  
divination by, viii, 10 *seq.*  
advises with Núshírwán,  
viii, 47 *seq.*  
instructed by Núshírwán  
to prove Hurmuzd, viii,  
56 *seq.*  
abolition of Fire-worship  
foretold by, viii, 68  
death of, viii, 69, 71  
=Burzmihir (?), viii, 71  
Mas'údí on, viii, 71  
Byzantine title, vii, 218

## C

CÆSAR, the dynastic title of the  
kings of the West or Rúm  
who were regarded as be-  
ing descended from Salm,  
the son of Farídún, 154,  
161, 162, 165, 167, 169,  
172-174, i, 262; ii, 383;  
iii, 9; vi, 112, 297, 353;  
vii, 163; viii, 8 *seq.*, 19,  
43 *seq.*, 51 *seq.*, 230, 232,  
245, 252 *seq.*, 257 *seq.*, 299,  
306 *seq.*, 334, 373 *seq.*,  
408 *seq.*; ix, 10, 23  
transliteration of, i, 84 and  
*note*  
*temp.* Luhrásp, 154, iv, 339  
*seq.*; v, 11, 32, 167  
daughter of=Katáyún, iv,  
314; v, 167, 205  
capital of, founded by Salm,  
iv, 325

Cæsar, *temp.* Luhrásp, Nastár,  
master of the herds to, iv,  
325  
refuses to employ Gush-  
tásp, iv, 326  
Búráb, court-farrier to, iv,  
326  
refuses to employ Gush-  
tásp, iv, 327  
proposes to give his eldest  
daughter in marriage, iv,  
329  
wrath of, at his daughter's  
choice of Gushtásp, iv,  
330  
yields to bishop's counsel,  
iv, 331  
refuses to provide for his  
daughter and Gushtásp,  
iv, 331  
bids Mírin slay the wolf of  
Fáskún, iv, 333  
inspects the slain wolf, iv,  
341  
marries his second daugh-  
ter to Mírin, iv, 341  
bids Ahran slay the dragon  
of Mount Sakila, iv, 342  
third daughter of, iv, 342  
*seq.*  
married to Ahran, iv,  
348  
rejoices in his two sons in  
law, iv, 348  
proclaims the tidings of the  
slaying of the wolf and  
the dragon, iv, 349  
sons-in-law of, display their  
accomplishment on the  
riding-ground, iv, 349  
sees Gushtásp's prowess and  
questions him, iv, 350  
learns the truth about the  
wolf and the dragon and  
asks pardon of Gushtásp  
and Katáyún, iv, 351  
wrath of, with Mírin and  
Ahran, iv, 351  
seeks to find out through  
Katáyún who Gushtásp  
is, iv, 351

Cæsar, *temp.* Luhrásp, receives Gushtásp with honour at court, iv, 352  
 Ilyás refuses to pay tribute to iv, 352  
 receives a scornful message from Mírín and Alhran, iv, 353  
 takes counsel with Gushtásp, iv, 353  
 bids Gushtásp lead forth the host, iv, 354  
 arrays the host, iv, 355  
 Gushtásp brings the dead body of Ilyás to, iv, 355  
 welcomes Gushtásp after his victory, iv, 356  
 consults Gushtásp about demanding tribute from Írán, iv, 356  
 sends an envoy to Luhrásp, iv, 356  
 gives audience to Zarír, iv, 360  
 replies, to, and dismisses Zarír, iv, 361  
 questions Gushtásp, iv, 361  
 sends Gushtásp to Zarír's camp, iv, 361  
 goes to feast with Gushtásp and discovers who he is, iv, 363  
 gives gifts to Katáyún, iv, 363  
 the Íránian chiefs, iv, 364  
 parts in good will from Gushtásp, iv, 364  
 sends embassy to Gushtásp on hearing of Arjásp's defeat, v, 75  
*temp.* Humái, sues to Rushnawád for peace, v, 307  
 =Failakús *q.v.*, vi, 24, 26, 27  
 =Sikandar *q.v.*, vi, 40, 42, 49, 113, 114, 118, 121, 122, 124, 128, 129, 142, 158, 161, 170, 174, 178, 183  
 =Valerian (Bazánúsh *q.v.*), vi, 326  
 =Jovian (Bazánúsh *q.v.*), vi, 353, 354

Cæsar, *temp.* Shápúr son of Ardshúr, 161  
 pays tribute, vi, 298  
*temp.* Shápúr son of Urmuzd, 162, vi, 341 *seq.*, 345 *seq.*  
 Shápúr in disguise visits, vi, 336  
 entertained by, vi, 337  
 discovered by, vi, 337  
 arrested by, vi, 337  
 sewn up in an ass's skin by, vi, 338  
 put in charge of wife of vi, 338  
 invades and ravages Írán, vi, 338  
 Shápúr prepares to attack, vi, 346  
 overthrown by Shápúr at Taisafún, vi, 346 *seq.*  
 Shápúr's treatment of, vi, 349, 357  
 mother of, vi, 351  
 brother of (Yánús *q.v.*), vi, 351  
*temp.* Yazdagird son of Shápúr, vi, 389  
 pays tribute, vi, 389  
*temp.* Bahrám Gúr, 165  
 embassy of, to Bahrám Gúr, vii, 5, 86, 100  
 marches on Írán, vii, 84  
 propounds questions to Bahrám Gúr, vii, 102  
 envoy of, questioned by the high priest, vii, 104  
*temp.* Núshírwán, 167, 169, 172-174, vii, 244 *seq.*, 269, 273  
 replies to Núshírwán concerning Munzir, vii, 245  
 treasures of, taken by Núshírwán, vii, 255, 258  
 sues to Núshírwán for peace, vii, 261  
 sends tribute to Núshírwán, vii, 362  
 death of, viii, 43  
*temp.* Núshírwán, Hurmuzd, and Khusrau Parwíz, 172



- Cæsar, temp.* Núshírwán, *etc.*,  
 offends Núshírwán, viii,  
 44 *seq.*  
 marches against Núshírwán, viii, 46  
 attacks Hurmuzd, viii, 93  
 retakes cities, viii, 93  
 makes peace with Hurmuzd, viii, 95  
 welcomes Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 257  
 offers help to Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 261  
 changes his mind, viii, 262  
 consults the astrologers, viii, 264  
 decides to help Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 265  
 offers daughter to Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 266  
 offers of, accepted by Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 269, 270  
 talisman of, viii, 271, 275  
 deceives Rúman envoys, viii, 272  
 mastered by Kharrád, viii, 274  
 gifts of, to Kharrád, viii, 278  
 writes to Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 279  
 praises Rúman envoys, viii, 279  
 counsels Maryam, viii, 279, 280  
 gives Niyátús charge of Maryam, viii, 280  
 corpse of Kút sent to, viii, 291  
 Khusrau Parwíz announces death of Bahráw Chúbína to, viii, 345  
 daughter of, gives birth to Shírwí, viii, 371  
 Khusrau Parwíz' letter to, viii, 373  
 rejoicing of, at birth of Shírwí, viii, 374  
 embassy of, to Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 374  
 gifts of, given by Khusrau Parwíz to Shírwí, viii, 381
- Cæsar, temp.* Núshírwán, *etc.*,  
 invited to seize Írán, viii, 408  
 tricked by Khusrau Parwíz and retreats, viii, 410  
 letter of, about the True Cross referred to, ix, 22  
*Cæsarean* birth, of Rustam, i, 236, 321 *seq.*  
*Calanus* (Sphínés), Indian ascetic, vi, 61  
*Onesicritus* and, vi, 61  
*Alexander the Great* and, vi, 61  
 death of, vi, 61  
 derivation of, vi, 61  
 identical with the sage sent by Kaid to Sikandar (*see* Four Wonders), vi, 62  
*Calendar*, Zoroastrian, i, 88; iii, 286  
 adopted by Darius Hystaspis, i, 59  
*Callinicus*. *See* Káliniyús.  
*Callisthenes*, Greek historian *temp.* Alexander the Great  
 vi, 12, 74  
 Romance of Alexander fathered on, vi, 13  
 account of, vi, 13  
*Callitris quadrivalvis*, the Arar tree, vi, 19  
*Cambyzes*, father of Cyrus the Great, ii, 190  
 identical with Siyáwush in legend, ii, 191  
*Cambyzes*, son of Cyrus the Great and King of Persia (B.C. 528-521), v, 10, 11; vi, 16  
*Camel*, piece in chess, vii, 422  
 position of, vii, 422  
 move of, vii, 422  
*Cancer*, constellation, iii, 125, 151, 255; vii, 257  
 moon in, an evil omen, i, 188; iii, 255 (?)  
*Candace* (Kandake, Kaidáfa *q.v.*), dynastic title of the queens of Ethiopia, vi, 13, 72

- Candace Alexander the Great and, vi, 65 *seq.*
- Candahar. *See* Kandahar
- Cannibalism, iii, 191, 244
- Canopus, star, i, 188  
of Yaman, i, 266; ii, 203; iii, 297; vi, 382
- Cappadocia (Pálawína), vi, 294
- Captives, mutilation of, vi, 323, 334, 348, 357  
settlement of, vi, 327, 357
- Carline and Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 189, 303
- Carnelians, ii, 123  
of Yaman, ii, 123
- Carrhæ, defeat of Crassus at, i, 15
- Carthaginians, the, vi, 30  
Alexander the Great's legendary visit to, vi, 30
- Casaubon, Isaac, vi, 13
- Caspian Sea, i, 3, 4, 16, 19, 56, 57, 338; ii, 189, 336; iii, 10, 192; iv, 136; v, 13
- Caspian Gates, iv, 315; vi, 31, 32
- Cassander (B.C. 350-297), eldest son of Antipater and King of Macedonia, vi, 82
- Castellan, bishop as. *See* Bishop.
- Castes, division of Aryans into, i, 7  
Íránians into, i, 130, 132
- Castle, White. *See* White Castle.  
of the Aláns. *See* Aláns.  
Bahman. *See* Bahman.  
Oblivion, vii, 184  
Kubád son of Píruz confined in, vii, 184  
escapes from, viii, 184
- Catholicus, viii, 195
- Catullus, Roman poet (B.C. 84-54), i, 60  
on Persian next of kin marriage, i, 60
- Caucasus, mountain-range running in a south-easterly direction from the Black Sea to the Caspian, i, 16; iv, 316; vi, 15; vii, 214, 217; viii, 72
- Caucasus, passes in, i, 16; vi, 79  
fortified, i, 16, vii, 153, 187, 216, 239  
Mas'údi's account of, vii, 215  
barrier (mythical) of Alexander the Great (Sikandar) in, i, 16; vi, 78, 189, 249  
legend of, in the Kurán, vi, 78  
site of, vi, 79  
described, vi, 164
- Cave, cavern, in Mázandarán, ii, 28
- White Dív's, ii, 28, 55, 58 *seq.*
- Afrásiyáb's, in Ázarbáiján, iv, 136 *seq.*, 259 *seq.*
- Central clime. *See* Clime.
- Chách (Shásh, Old Táshkand, now in ruins), city on the right bank of the Jaxartes west of Ferghána, famous for its bows, ii, 241, 258; iv, 19, 187, 188, 255; vii, 167, 329, 334, 340, 343, 348, 358, 359; viii, 314, 377; ix, 115, 116  
bow of, i, 227; iii, 123, 181, 227; v, 244; vi, 384; viii, 125, 126, 294  
government of, given to Tús by Rustam, ii, 358  
thane of, one of Firdaus's authorities, vi, 197, 210  
referred to, vi, 229 and *note*  
daughter of governor of, vii, 285  
intrigue of, vii, 285  
executed, vii, 286  
battle-axes of, ix, 118
- Chaghán, district on the right bank of the Oxus where that river is crossed from Tirmid, and city further north on the upper waters of river of the same name, iii, 152, 177, 228; vii, 94, 157, 359

- Chaghán, ceded by Kubád to the Haitálíans, vii, 198  
monarch of = Faghánish, vii, 333
- Chaghwán = Chaghán (?), vi, 174  
Sikandar visits, vi, 174  
quits, vi, 175
- Cháha, hostelry of, i, 45
- Chahár Makála, Persian treatise, i, 23  
account of Firdausí in, i, 38, 39, 45
- Chahram (Jahram *q.v.*), city in Párs
- Chalah, viii, 193
- Chálandshán. *See* Chánlandshán.
- Chalcedon, viii, 194, 195
- Chalybon-Beroea (Aleppo), city in northern Syria, vii, 218; viii, 41  
held to ransom by Núshírwán, vii, 218
- Champions, the Twelve, vii, 156.  
*See* Rukhs.
- Chamrosh, mythical bird, i, 235
- Chánlandshán (Khálanján. Khánlanján), district and town (Fírúzá) near Ispahán on the Zayinda river (*see* LEC. pp. 206, 207 and *note*), i, 29
- Ahmad ibn Muhammad of, patron of Firdausí, i, 29  
Firdausí's escape from drowning at, i, 26, 29
- Chao-wou = Sáwa *q.v.*, viii, 72
- Characters, chief, of Sháhnáma, i, 49
- Characteristics, of Írán, i, 3 *seq.*
- Characteristics of a Happy Man, Pahlaví text, vii, 279
- Charam, place in Írán, iii, 40, 41, 52, 68, 85, 86, 111, 112
- Charbar, place on the coast of Balúchistán (Makrán), vi, 70
- Chares of Mytilene, Greek writer and official at the court of Alexander the Great ii 10; vi, 61
- Chares of Mytilene, story by, of Hystaspes and Zariadres quoted, iv, 314
- Charinda, river, iii, 10 *note*
- Charjui (Ámwi *q.v.*), city on the Oxus, vii, 91 *note*
- Charogos. *See* Tainúsh.
- Chase, equipage for, vii, 48, 76; viii, 384
- Chess, game of, 169, vi, 201; vii, 14 and *note*, 280, 385 *seq.*; viii, 371  
Note on, vii, 380  
sent by the Rája of Hind to Núshírwán, vii, 5, 380, 384 *seq.*  
expounded by Búzurjmíhr, vii, 380, 388  
symbolism of, vii, 381  
two forms of, vii, 381, 388, 422  
changes in powers of pieces in, vii, 381  
Mas'údí on, vii, 382  
invention of, Story of the, 169, vii, 394 *seq.*
- Chess-board, vii, 14, 385, 388
- Chess-men, vii, 14, 380, 388
- Chevy Chase, ii, 82
- Chigil (Naryn ?) district and river, tributary of the Jaxartes, iv, 155  
monarch of, v, 110  
commands the left, v, 110 = Arjásp, v, 54, 86  
Turkman of, = Gurgsár, v, 139
- Chihrzád (Humái), daughter and wife of Sháh Bahman, ii, 3; v, 290 and *note*  
meaning of, v, 290 and *note*
- Chijast (Khanjast, Urumiah), lake in Ázarbáiján, iv, 136 *note*
- Children, sometimes brought up unnamed, i, 8, 179
- Chín, country, China, but generally in the Sháhnáma equivalent to Chinese Tartary and sometimes to Túrán, 160, 165, 173,

Chin, count y, China—*cont.*

i, 207, 229, 230, 261, 267,  
351, 371; ii, 77, 82, 111,  
143, 154, 156, 237, 277,  
286, 287, 289, 297, 305,  
307, 357, 359, 383, 394;  
iii, 46, 49, 103, 106 and  
*passim*.

assigned by Faridún to Túr,  
i, 189

brocade of, i, 269, 233 and  
*passim*

coasts of, vi, 173

cloth of gold from, ii, 275;  
vi, 182, 334

dínárs of, iv, 241

Faghfúr of. *See* Faghfúr.

helm of, i, 132

images of, v, 35

implements of, vi, 122

Khán of. *See* Khán.

King of=Afrásiyáb, ii, 99;  
iv, 165, 170, 230

=Khán, iii, 227, 228;  
vii, 87

=Arjásp, v, 36, 52, 55,  
69, 86, 108

=Faghfúr, vii, 131

lord of=Mahnúd, iv, 142

=Sikandar, vi, 113

=Faghfúr, vi, 171

mace of, iii, 129

ornaments of, ii, 232; vi,  
102, 139

paper of, vi, 172

pen of, vi, 57, 99

prince of=Khán, iii, 226

=Afrásiyáb, iv, 194

=Arjásp, v, 35

=Parmúda, viii, 142

=Sáwa, viii, 222

rarities of, vi, 171, 173; vii,  
49

robes of, iii, 329; viii, 205,  
257

Rose of=daughter of the  
Khán, vii, 363 and *note*

sea of, i, 113, 140, 252, 349;  
ii, 12, 256, 276, 285, 356,  
357; iii, 151, 252; iv,  
237, 254; v, 109, 203.

Chin, sea of—*cont.*

233, 239 *note*; vi, 149;  
vii, 343; viii, 377

shield of, iii, 125, 140, 256;  
ix, 118

Sikandar goes to, vi, 169

silk of, i, 157; iii, 104, 165;  
v, 159, 295; vi, 85, 266;

vii, 73, 92, 347, 364, 418;  
viii, 258, 269, 374

steel of, iii, 186

stuffs of, vi, 143, 215

ware of, vii, 78

sage of, viii, 235

sashes from, ix, 12, 53

gold thread of, ix, 82

merchants of, ix, 89

China, country, vi, 204

silk industry of, vi, 204

Chináb (Akesines), river in the  
Punjab, vi, 31, 64

Chinese, viii, 72

language, vi, 147

Chingish, Túránian hero, 149, iii,  
207

volunteers to avenge Kámús,  
iii, 194

challenges Rustam, iii, 194

slain by Rustam, iii, 195

Chínwí, noble of Chín, viii, 331

Chionitæ, people, v, 13

geographical position of, v,  
13

Chorene, Moses of. *See* Moses.

Chosrau, Chosroes I (Kisrá),  
Sásanian Sháh, vii, 212,  
281. *See* Nāshírwár.

Chosroes, king of Armenia, vi,  
202

Christ, 174, vi, 339; vii, 207,  
249, 264, 270, 273, 276;  
ix, 24, 109

Faith of, vi, 133, 339; vii,  
274; viii, 43, 191, 272,  
310, 380

account of, viii, 276

father of, viii, 276

mother of, viii, 276

Cross of, viii, 377, 380; ix,  
23

laughter of, viii, 191, 380

- Christian, Christians, 167, vi, 342; vii, 171, 254, 270; viii, 21, 67, 195, 196, 256, 272, 308, 310, 381; ix, 23  
rites of marriage, vi, 104  
Faith, vi, 356  
persecution of, vii, 153  
Firdausi's view of, vii, 219  
wife of Núshírwán, vii, 263, 274  
    mother of Núshzád, vii, 263  
    helps Núshzád in his revolt, vii, 266  
    laments for Núshzád, vii, 276  
    support Núshzád, vii, 266, 272  
    shut gates of Kársán against Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 252  
Christianity, vi, 138  
    polemics against, vii, 219, 270, 273  
Chúbín (Júbín), father, according to Mas'údí, of Bahráw Chúbína, viii, 77  
Chúbína, viii, 215, 222  
    meaning of, viii, 98 *note*  
Cilicia (Kaidáfa), most south-easterly province of Asia Minor, vi, 294  
Circesium, viii, 188  
City of Women, 160. *See* Harúm.  
Claudius, Roman emperor (A.D. 41-54), iii, 10  
Cleophis, Indian queen, vi, 65  
    Alexander the Great and, vi, 65  
Climate, of Írán, i, 4, 5  
    Mázandarán, ii, 27  
Clime, Climes, the seven, i, 40, 71, 122, 123, 238; ii, 15  
    *note*, 372; iii, 290, 317; vi, 179, 262, 266, 273, 280, 376, 377; viii, 395  
    Kai Khusrau surveys, in his divining-cup, iii, 318  
    Central, i, 71, 122; ii, 27  
Cloud, emblem of prosperity, i, 73, 113, 114; ii, 263 and *note*; iv, 141; vi, 96  
Cloud, thunder-, as water-stealing demon, i, 7  
    of bale=Afrásyáb, ii, 13  
    name given by Rustam to himself, ii, 53  
Clough, quoted, viii, 187  
Cocks and hens, taught to crow daybreak, i, 126  
Colchians, people of the south-eastern shores of the Euxine, vi, 72  
Colic, cure of, vii, 39  
Commander of the Faithful, ix, 72  
    'Umar, the first, ix, 72 and *note*  
Commons, king of the, vii, 3  
Communists (Mazdakites, *q.v.*), vii, 185  
Companions of the Prophet (Muhammad), 139  
    praise of, 139, i, 106  
Constantinople, vii, 316; viii, 194  
    conspirator against Núshírwán escapes to, vii, 316  
Contents, General Table of, ix, 139  
Cook, chief, of Núshírwán, grievance of, viii, 18  
Cordwainer. *See* Shoemaker.  
Corn-land, taxes on, vii, 215  
Corpse, 160  
Cos, island in the Ægean sea, vi, 204  
    silk industry of, vi, 204  
Cosmogony, ancient Íránian, i, 5, 71  
    Firdausi's, 102, iv, 136  
Country of the Blest. *See* Blst.  
Courses, the Seven, of Rustam, 143, ii, 29, 44 *seq.*  
Crassus, the triumvir (B.C. 115-53), i, 15  
    defeat of, at Carrhæ, i, 15  
Creation, Zoroastrian account of, i, 5, 117  
    Firdausi's account of, i, 102 *seq.*  
Crete, island, south of Greece, vi, 323 *note.*

- Crete, Minos king of, legend of, vi, 323 *note*
- Crocodile, iii, 278  
= assassin, i, III  
= Kámús, iii, 192
- Cross, the, 174, vi, 351, 352; vii, 249, 270, 276; viii, 308, 309, 374  
captured by Dáráb, vi, 306 and *note*  
religion of, vi, 138  
Passion of, vi, 339  
the true, viii, 191, 196, 253, 377, 378, 380; ix, 4, 5, 10, 24  
restoration of, ix, 7, 56  
of Christ, ix, 23  
Elevation of, ix, 43
- Crows and Owls, story of, viii, 263 and *note*
- Crystal, House of, ix, 25 and *note*
- Ctesias. *See* Ktesias.
- Ctesiphon (Taisafún *q.v.*), city on the left bank of the Tigris some 25 miles below Baghdád, originally an extension of Seleucia on the right bank of that river, ii, 80; vi, 321, 322, 325, 372; viii, 42, 188, 189, 193, 194, 196; ix, 65 *seq.*  
taken by Shahrbaráz, ix, 43, 44  
Sa'ad, ix, 67  
booty found at, ix, 68
- Culture-heroes. *See* Gaiúmart, Húshang, Talmúras, and Jamshíd, i, 118 *seq.*
- Cup, divining-, of Kai Khusrau, iii, 317, 318, 323  
inexhaustible, of Kaid, 159, vi, 94, 100, 109  
poisoned, proffered to Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 259  
crystal, to detect poison (?), vii, 51
- Cybele, Greek goddess, vi, 71  
= Hittite Ma, vi, 71
- Cymbals, of the Brides of the Treasure, vi, 250; vii, 35 and *note*
- Cypress, of Kishmar. *See* Kishmar.
- Cyrus the Great (B.C. 558-528), son of Cambyses and founder of the Persian empire  
legend of, in Herodotus identical with that of Kai Khusrau, ii, 9, 190  
in Ctesias transferred to Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 195  
rise of, i, 18  
compared to that of Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 194  
historical parallel with Kai Khusrau, v, 10

## D

- DABISTÁN, 17th century Persian treatise, v, 28
- Cypress of Kishmar, account of, in, v, 28
- Dád, Íránian warrior, vii, 86
- Dádáfríd, melody, viii, 398 and *note*
- Daévas. *See* Div.
- Daghwí, desert in Turkistán, ii, 193; iv, 117
- Dahae *i.e.*, "foes" or "robbers," a name given by the Íráni-ans to the nomad tribes dwelling east of the Caspian and north of the Atrak in the region now occupied by the Yamut Turkmans, i, 19; iii, 10
- Daháka (Azhi, Azi, Zahhák *q.v.*), evil spirit, i, 7, 142, 172
- Dahistán, stead or home of the Dahae *q.v.* and town between Harát and Marv, i, 280, 344 *seq.*, 349, 363, iv, 61, 72, 79, 148, 157; ix, 95
- Naudar beleaguered in, by Afrásiyáb, i, 353

- Dai, genius, i, 88, 89; iii, 287, 328  
 month or day, i, 88, 89; v, 43; vi, 306; viii, 173, 421; ix, 17  
 pa Mihr, day, i, 88; v, 16
- Dái Marj, place where Bahrám Gúr is said to have been drowned, vii, 6
- Dáitya, river, v, 13
- Daizan (Táír *q.v.*), vi, 322  
 legend of, vi, 322  
 daughter of, legend of, vi, 323
- Dakhma, "Tower of Silence," i, 81 and *note*
- Dakíki, Persian poet, 139, 154, 155, ii, 3 *note*, 8; v, 10, 13; vi, 196; viii, 190  
 account of, i, 28, 67, 69, 109; v, 20  
 Firdausí and, v, 21 *seq.*, 30, 87, 88  
 work of, compared with the Yátkár-i-Zarífrán, v, 24 *seq.*
- Dámaghán, city on the road from Tihrán to Nishápúr and the capital of the province of Kúmis, ii, 15; iv, 255; viii, 109, 189
- Dáman-i-Kuh, the northern "mountain-skirt" of modern Persia, iii, 15
- Damascus, chief city in Syria, vi, 195  
 Nicolaus of, Greek historian, *temp.* Augustus, vi, 195
- Damáwand, volcano nearly 20,000 feet high and the culminating peak of the mountain-range south of the Caspian, i, 143, 144, 148; vi, 202; viii, 391  
 Zakhák lettered on, i, 169, 173  
 Arish's arrow-shot from, v, 12
- Dambar, city in Kábulistán (?) which was regarded as Indian, i, 252, 256; iv, 278, 283, 284; vii, 396, 399, 421
- Dámdád, Nask, i, 70 *note*
- Damúr, Túránian hero, ii, 296, 319; iv, 156  
 overthrown by Siyáwush, ii, 295  
 advocates execution of Siyáwush, ii, 317
- Danbar. *See* Dambar.
- Dandamis. *See* Mandanes.
- Dáng, coin, ix, 94 and *note*
- Dánishwar, the dihkán, supposed compiler of the Bástán-náma, *temp.* Yazdagird III, i, 67, 68
- Danube, river, v, 11  
 Darius' expedition to, v, 11.
- Dará, son of Dáráb, Sháh (Darius Codomanus *q.v.*) 158, i, 42; ii, 3, 9; v, 281; vi, 83 *seq.*, 112, 113, 123, 124, 132, 137, 170, 172, 188, 325, 353; viii, 220, 242, 387  
 first historic Sháh in the Sháhnáma, i, 49  
 origin of name, v, 297 *note*  
 legendary son of Dáráb, vi, 17, 27  
 appointed by Dáráb to succeed him, vi, 27  
 Reign of, 158, vi, 29 *seq.*  
 Note on, vi, 29 *seq.*  
 historical account of, vi, 29  
 movements of, after his final defeat by Alexander (Sikandar), vi, 31  
 Sikandar's correspondence with the wife and daughter of, vi, 33  
 accession of, vi, 34  
 letter of, to the kings, vi, 34  
 pays his troops, vi, 35  
 ambassadors come to, vi, 35  
 demands tribute from Sikandar, vi, 36

- Dará, marches against Sikandar, vi, 37  
 Sikandar's visit to the camp of, vi, 38  
 invites Sikandar to a banquet, vi, 40  
 ambassador of, recognises Sikandar, vi, 40  
 sends horsemen in pursuit of Sikandar vi, 41  
 defeated by Sikandar, vi, 43  
 collects another army, vi, 43  
 defeat of vi, 44 -  
 goes to Chahram vi, 44  
 Istakhr vi, 44  
 takes counsel with his chiefs vi, 45  
 collects a new host vi, 46  
 marches from Istakhr, vi, 46  
 defeat of, vi, 46  
 withdraws to Kirmán, vi, 46  
 bewails himself, vi, 47  
 letter of, to Sikandar, vi, 49  
 Fúr, vi, 50  
 marches against Sikandar, vi, 51  
 abandoned by his troops and flees, vi, 51  
 murdered by his ministers, vi, 52  
 murderers of, arrested by Sikandar, vi, 53  
 dying interview of, with Sikandar, vi, 53  
 vengeance promised to, by Sikandar, vi, 53  
 tells his last wishes to Sikandar, vi, 54  
 bestows Rúshanak upon Sikandar, vi, 55, 86  
 dies, vi, 55  
 burial of, vi, 56  
 Sásán, son of, vi, 211  
 kindred of, support Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 223
- Dará (Daras), city, viii, 41, 194  
 taken by Núshírwán, viii, 41  
 ceded by Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 188
- Dará Panáh, viii, 189, 284  
 goes disguised to Khusrau Parwíz' camp, viii, 286  
 betrays Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 286  
 returns to Bahrám Chúbína, with forged letter, viii, 287
- Daráb, Sháh, son of Balhman and Humái, 158, i, 42; ii, 3, 9; v, 281, 292, 297 *seq.*; vi, 11, 34 and *note*, 49, 83, 84, 86, 132, 137, 172, 188; vii, 215; viii, 191  
 founding legend of, ii, 11; v, 293 *seq.*  
 Tabarí's version of, v, 297 *note*  
 birth of, v, 294  
 referred to, v, 294 *seq.*  
 exposed on the Parát, v, 295  
 found and adopted by a launderer, v, 296 *seq.*  
 royal birth of, asserts itself, v, 298  
 youthful escapades of, v, 298  
 brought up as a cavalier, v, 299  
 feels lack of natural affection for the launderer, v, 300  
 hears of his case from the launderer's wife, v, 300  
 enlists, v, 301  
 seen by Humái, v, 302  
 and the adventure of the ruined vault, v, 303  
 receives gifts from Rashnawád, v, 304  
 questioned by Rashnawád, v, 304  
 prowess of, against the Rúmans, v, 305, 306  
 praised and rewarded by Rashnawád, v, 305, 306  
 captures the Cross, v, 306 and *note*  
 takes of the spoil one spear, v, 307  
 returns to Írán, v, 307



- Daráb, Rashnawád hears from the launderer and his wife of the case of, v, 308  
 Rashnawád writes to Humái about, v, 308  
 recognised by Humái as being her son, v, 308  
 appears with Rashnawád before Humái, v, 309 *seq.*  
 crowned by Humái and accepts her excuses, v, 310  
 Humái proclaims the accession of, v, 311  
 visited by, and rewards, the launderer and his wife, v, 311, 312  
 Reign of, 158, vi, 11 *seq.*  
 Note on, vi, 11 *seq.*  
 father of Sikandar in Persian legend, vi, 16  
 legendary father of Dará, vi, 17  
 harangues the chiefs, vi, 20  
 ambassadors come to, vi, 21  
 employs Rúman artificers, vi, 21  
 wars with the Arabs, vi, 21  
 defeats and demands tribute from Arabs, vi, 22  
 wars with Rúm, vi, 22  
 defeats Failakús, vi, 23  
 grants terms of peace to Failakús, vi, 24  
 marries the daughter of Failakús, vi, 25  
 returns to Párs, vi, 25  
 becomes disaffected towards his wife (Náhíd), vi, 25  
 marries again, vi, 27  
 Dará is born to him, vi, 27  
 fails in health, vi, 27  
 appoints Dará to succeed him, vi, 27  
 dies, vi, 28  
 Daráb, Darábgird, city in Párs, 158, vi, 17, 198, 199; viii, 313  
 Darband, town and pass between the Caucasus *q.v.*, and the Caspian, ii, 336; viii, 369 *note*  
 Darband, Pass of, described, i, 16  
 fortification of, i, 16, 17  
 and *note*, vii, 213, 239  
 Mas'údí's accounts of, vii, 215  
 Darí, vii, 430 and *note*  
 Darel, Pass of, in the Caucasus, vi, 79  
 Darius, Hystaspis, Sháh, i, 9, 65; v, 10; viii, 187  
 trilingual inscription of, at Bihistún, i, 6  
 Zoroastrian calendar adopted by, i, 59  
 reign of, and Gushtásp's compared, v, 11  
 conversion of, v, 11  
 Darius, Codomanus (Dará *q.v.*)  
 Sháh, i, 49; vi, 16, 17, 29  
 defeated at Issus, vi, 30  
 Alexander escapes from the banquet of, vi, 30  
 defeated at Gaugamela, vi, 31  
 asks that his family may be restored to him, vi, 31  
 writes to Porus, *\*vi*, 31  
 historical account of the death of, vi, 31  
 daughter of, marries Alexander, vi, 33  
 corpse of, sent to Párs, vi, 33  
 assassins of, punished, vi, 33  
 Dareja, river in Ázarbáiján, v, 14  
 Darkness, Land of. *See* Gloom.  
 House of, ix, 7;  
 Dármán, viii, 202  
 Darmesteter, Professor, on Firdausí's geography, ii, 79, 80  
 on Afrásiyáb's capture by Húm, iv, 136  
 Story of the Worm, vi, 203  
 Haftwád, vi, 206  
 Darún, Zoroastrian religious rite, v, 19  
 Daryai Rúd, river in Ázarbáiján, v, 14

- Dastagird, city, viii, 193, 196;  
ix, 7  
taken by Heraclius, viii, 194
- Dashma, Iránian hero, iv, 148
- Dástán (*Zál q.v.*), i, 84, 248, 264
- Dástán-i-Sám (*Zál q.v.*), i, 84
- Dástán-i-Zand (*Zál q.v.*), i, 245  
and *note*, 248
- Date-palm, i, 4  
taxes on, vii, 215, 225
- Daughter of Kaid. *See* Kaid,  
Four Wonders of.
- Daulat Sháh, author of "Lives  
of the Poets," i, 24
- Death, early, Firdausí's justifi-  
cation of, ii, 119
- Dead Sea, viii, 192
- Deinon. *See* Dinon.
- Deipnosophistæ*, of Athenæus, ii,  
10  
quoted, iv, 314
- Derketo, goddess, v, 292  
legend of, v, 292
- Destiny, Muhammadan and Zor-  
oastrian conceptions of, i,  
52
- Déwasárm, king of Hind, vii, 381  
sends the game of chess to  
Núshírwán, vii, 380
- Dharma, Indian god of righteous-  
ness, iv, 138  
follows in the form of a dog  
the Pándavas in their pil-  
grimage, iv, 139
- Dhoulkarnain. *See* Zu-'l-kar-  
nain.
- Dhú Kár, battle of, viii, 188, ix,  
4, 5, 66  
historical account of, viii,  
190  
date of, viii, 191
- Diagram to illustrate reign of  
Gushtásp, v, 27  
Persian Romance of Alex-  
ander the Great, vi, 84
- Díba-i-Khusrauí, treasure, viii,  
406 and *note*
- Dice, vii, 381  
used in the game of nard,  
vii, 381, 389  
symbolism of, vii, 381, 382
- Dihkán, Persian generic title, i,  
56, 81  
Faith of, vi, 95
- Dijla (Arwand, Tigris *q.v.*), river,  
i, 160  
Faridún's crossing of, i, 160
- Diláfrúz, Iránian hero, iv, 147
- Diláfrúz, a bramble-grubber,  
Bahrán Gúr and, vii, 70  
*seq.*
- Diláfrúz-i-Farrúk'pái, Iránian  
slave-girl, 162, vi, 3  
slave to Cæsar's wife, vi,  
338  
pities Shápúr, vi, 339  
discovers who Shápúr is, vi,  
339  
frees Shápúr from the ass's  
skin, vi, 340  
escapes with Shápúr from  
Rúm, vi, 340 *seq.*  
entertained by a gardener,  
vi, 342  
praised by Shápúr, vi, 346  
named and honoured by  
Shápúr, vi, 356  
meaning of, vi, 356 *note*
- Dílám, Dílámán, district on the  
Caspian now represented  
by Talish and part of  
Gílán, vi, 202, 227; vii,  
243, 244, 362
- Dílámids (Buyids), dynasty rul-  
ing in south-western Irán  
in the 10th century A.D.,  
i, 14, 21, 45
- Dílámite, 'Alí the, friend and  
helper of Firdausí, i, 35;  
ix, 121
- Dilánjám, Cæsar's (*temp.* Luh-  
rásp) second daughter, iv,  
333  
asked in marriage by Mírín,  
iv, 333  
married to Mírín, iv, 341
- Dilárái, wife to Dárá and mother  
of Rúshanak, 158, 159, vi,  
87 *seq.*  
visited by Náhid, vi, 89
- Dimna, Káfía and, 169. *See*  
Fables of Bidpai.

- Dīna-i Maīnog-i Khirad, Pahlavī text, ii, 189  
 quoted, vii, 279
- Dīnār, gold coin, i, 81, 231, 303  
 and *passim*
- Dīnawarī, Arabic historian (ninth century), vi, 16, 64, 80, 81, 256, 323; vii, 6, 156, 186, 214
- Dīnkard, Pahlavī text, i, 70 *note*, 373; ii, 26, 81; vi, 252
- Diodorus, Greek historian, *temp.* Julius Cæsar and Augustus, v, 293  
*Bibliotheca* of, v, 293
- Diognetus, Greek writer, *temp.* Alexander the Great, vi, 12
- Dionysus, Greek god, vi, 71  
 temple of, visited by Si-kandar, vi, 71
- Diram. *See* Drachm.
- Dirāzdast (Longimanus), title, v, 281; vi, 324 and *note*
- Dīv, dīvs (Daévas), demons or "foreign devils," 140, 143, 150, i, 42, 82, 130, 131, 134, 148, 227, 290; ii, 27, 33, 34, 38, 41 *seq.*, 57 *seq.*, 68, 73, 101, 102, 144; iii, 70, 74, 200, 232, 244, 255, 257 *seq.*, 261, 268, 273 *seq.*, 320, 330, iv, 86, 87, 177, 288, 296, v, 32, 58, 66, 71, 108, 174; 201, 202, 213, 220, 230; 245; vi, 135, 146, 150, 241; vii, 115, 154, 174, 368 *seq.*; viii, 159, 161, 206, 209, 211, 217, 218, 290, 341, 342, 399 and *note*, 418; ix, 18, 25
- rebel against Tahmúras, i, 127
- overthrown by Tahmúras, i, 127
- teach Tahmúras the art of writing, i, 127
- build edifices for Jamshīd, i, 133
- Dīv, dīvs, carry Jamshīd on his throne up to the sky, i, 133
- title of honour, ii, 29
- song of a, ii, 31
- Arjāsp informed by a, of Gushtāsp's resolve not to pay tribute, v, 36
- Mazdak's five, vii, 205
- Búzurjmihr's ten, vii, 368
- Akwán. *See* Akwán.
- =Ahriman, 139, i, 82, 126, 156, 195, 200; ii, 46, 324, 342, 370, 386, 400; iii, 189, 293, 333; iv, 63, 84, 201, 206, 278, 282, 286, 289 *seq.*, 301, 322, 341; v, 35, 81, 180, 188, 189, 194 *seq.*, 218, 228, 242; vi, 349; vii, 93, 107, 109, 117, 143, 154, 206, 227, 268, 289, 303, 304, 323, 332, 368 *seq.*, 376, 390; viii, 27, 50, 87, 123, 215, 222, 304, 341, 346, 411, ix, 47, 102, 104
- =Bahram Chúbína, viii, 153, 219, 293, 298
- witch, viii, 161
- =Zahhák, viii, 242
- =Kulún, viii, 342
- Binder of the=Tahmúras, i, 42, 125, 126, 214
- =Gúdarz, iv, 35
- =Rustam, iii, 253, 262
- Black, son of Ahriman, 139, i, 82, 117; ii, 53; v, 199; viii, 171
- White, 143, i, 82; ii, 27, 39 *seq.*, 43, 44, 54, 55, 58 *seq.*, 66, 93, 163, 373; iii, 143, 256, 314; iv, 136, 296; v, 117, 176, 203, 207, 234
- defeats Káuś, ii, 40
- blood of, cures blindness, ii, 58, 62
- slain by Rustam, ii, 60
- Divining-cup. *See* Cup.
- Dneiper (Borysthenes), river in southern European Russia, flowing into the Black Sea, iii, 191

- Don (Tanaïs), river in southern European Russia, flowing into the Sea of Azov, iv, 315 *note*, 316
- Doni*, *The Morall Philosophie of*, vii, 383
- Drachm (diram), silver coin, i, 81
- Dragon, 143, 154, 156, 160, 164, 165, i, 42, 123; vi, 132, 146
- Faridún takes the form of, i, 186
- of the Kashaf, i, 235
- Sám and the, i, 296 *seq.*, v, 202
- slain by Rustam and Rakhsh, ii, 48 *seq.*
- of Mount Sakila, iv, 342 *seq.*
- Gushtásp and, iv, 343 *seq.*
- teeth of, produced by Hishwí to Cæsar, iv, 351
- referred to, iv, 358
- Sikandar's adventure with, vi, 71, 151
- slain by Bahráw Gúr, vii, 42, 123 *seq.*
- described, i, 123, 296; iv, 345; v, 202. vi, 151; vii, 43, 123
- Dragon=Afrásiyáb, iii, 22, 46, 211, 219, 222, 248, 319, 343; iv, 270
- =Ahriman, i, 195; iii, 330
- =Ardawán, vi, 222
- =Fúr, vi, 113
- =Gív, iii, 58
- =Húmán, iv, 43, 52
- =Paláshán, iii, 26
- =Púládward, iii, 264
- =Rakhsh's dam, i, 379
- =Rakhsh, i, 380
- =Rustam, iii, 222
- =Zahhák, i, 155, 158, 161, 163, 168, 169, 275, 288, 292
- Dragon's child=Rúdába, i, 304
- Drangiana (Sistán), province in eastern Írán, i, 4; vi, 32
- Dream, dreams, veridical, i, 51
- Firdausí on, vii, 281
- Drean, Abúl Kásim of Gurgán's, iii, 190
- Afrásiyáb's, ii, 232 *seq.*
- referred to, ii, 243, 297, iv, 170, 267
- Firdausí's, of Mahmúd, i, 112
- Dakíkí, v, 23, 30
- Gúdarz's, ii, 363, 404
- Gushtásp's, v, 19
- Kaid's, v, 62, 91
- Katáyún's, iv, 316, 329, 330
- Núshírwán's, vii, 282 *seq.*; ix, 92
- Odatis', iv, 315
- Pápak's, vi, 200, 212
- Ífrán's, ii, 325
- Sám's, i, 243, 244
- Siyáwush's, ii, 309
- Tús', iii, 149
- Zariadres', iv, 315
- Draupadi, joint wife of the five Pándavas, iv, 138 and *note*, 139
- Drought and famine in Írán, i, 3, 5, 370, 371; ii, 363; vii, 159, 162
- Pírúz's measures to alleviate, vii, 159, 162
- breaking up of, described, vii, 163
- Mazdak's parable concerning, vii, 201
- Drváspa, genius of cattle, iv, 137
- Dualism, i, 5, 49, 50, 52, 56, 58
- taught by Urmuzd to Zarduhsht, v, 16
- Dughdhóvá, v, 14, 15
- account of, v, 14
- Dúk, plain, viii, 282, 284
- mountain, viii, 289
- Dukhtnúsh. *See* Núsha.
- Dunbar. *See* Dambar.
- Duncker, Professor, ii, 9
- on date of Zandavasta, ii, 9
- Dúrásróbó, a Karap *q.v.*, v, 15
- Dust, prevalence of, in Írán, i, 3
- as a metaphor, i, 73 and *passim*
- Dynasty, dynasties, Íranian, i, 49
- Pishdádian *q.v.*
- Kaíánian *q.v.*

Dynasty, Ashkánian *q.v.*  
Sásánian *q.v.*

## E

ECLIPSE of sun, total, *temp.*  
Pírúz, vii, 159

Edessa, S. James of, i, 374

Eggs, golden, as tribute, vi, 24,  
36, 160, 169

Egypt (Misr, *q.v.*), ii, 80; vi, 12,  
16, 17, 72, 81, 82; viii,  
187, 193

Pseudo-Callisthenes written  
in, vi, 13

invaded by Alexander the  
Great, vi, 30

Egyptian Egyptians, vi, 16;  
viii, 193; ix, 110

falsification of history by,  
vi, 16

thorn, viii, 210

linen, ix, 110

Ekbatana (Hamadán), the capi-  
tal of Media, i, 17; ii,  
191; vi, 31, 32

capital of the Manda, *q.v.*,  
i, 17

Elam (Susiana, Khúzistán),  
ancient kingdom and Per-  
sian province at the head  
of the Persian Gulf, i, 9;  
vi, 194, 198

Elburz. *See* Alburz.

Elements, the four, i, 102, 286

Elephant, elephants, i, 112 and  
*passim*

towers on, iv, 179

Fúr's, vi, 115, 116

Sikandar's device to over-  
come, vi, 115, 116

=Rustam, iii, 221, 253

=Rakhsh, iii, 257

=Fúr, vi, 117

piece in chess, vii, 285,  
423

position of, vii, 388, 422

move of, vii, 422

White, Zál's, 141, i, 328

referred to, i, 377

Elephantine, the—Rustam, ii,  
65, 67

Eleven Rukhs, Battle of the, iv,  
88

arranged by Gúdarz and  
Pírán, iv, 95 *seq.*

Firdausi's reflections on, iv,  
7, 98, 106

Ellipi, kingdom of, i, 9, 17

Elixir, 144, ii, 177, 178

Elymais (Elam, *q.v.*), kingdom,  
vi, 198

Endless peace, the, vii, 217

Enótokortai, the, vi, 80

Epirus, ancient kingdom in  
northern Greece, vi, 12

Alexander I of, vi, 12  
his expedition to Italy,

vi, 12

Equinox, autumnal, iv, 313

Erinde, river, iii, 10 and *note*, 11

Esdra (Ezra), Jewish priest and  
scribe, supposed by the  
Muhammadans to have  
restored from memory the  
law lost during the cap-  
tivity, vii, 207, 264

Ether, viii, 275

Ethics, Muhammadan, respected,  
viii, 74

Ethiop, Ethiopian, Ethiopic, i,  
44; iii, 226; vi, 43, 71,  
80

=Indian, vi, 13, 68

western and eastern, vi, 13,  
68, 71

version of the Pseudo-Callis-  
thenes, *q.v.*, vi, 17 and  
*note*, 18, 30, 33, 66, 67,  
71, 74, 82, 83

Ethiopia, vi, 72

flight of Nectanebus to, vi,  
18 *note*

western and eastern, vi, 68

=India, vi, 68

Eumenes, Greek ephemerist,  
*temp.* Alexander the  
Great, vi, 12

Euphrates (Farát, *q.v.*), river, ii,  
80; v, 292; vi, 31, 327;  
vii, 217; viii, 188, 190

Euxine, sea, i, 16; ii, 191, 336;  
vi, 72  
Eye, metaphor for child, i, 178,  
180, 181, 185, 194; ii,  
297, 328; v, 272; vii,  
276, 356  
evil, ii, 204, 252; iii, 141,  
157, 337; iv, 144, 282;  
v, 194, 245, 251, 290;  
vi, 266, 402; vii, 78, 81,  
172; viii, 16, 417  
turns milk to bane, vii, 320  
*seq.*, 324, 325

## F

FABLES OF BIDPAI (Book of  
Kalīla and Dimna), vii,  
213, 427 *seq.*; viii, 202  
*note*, 390  
introduction of, into Persia,  
vii, 213  
translation of, vii, 382, 383  
Pīrdaus's account of, vii,  
430  
vogue of, vii, 383  
origin of, vii, 383  
Núshírwán's acquisition of,  
vii, 423 *seq.*  
Faghánísh, *temp.* Pírúz, king of  
the Haitálians, 168, vii,  
157  
helps Pírúz for a considera-  
tion, vii, 157  
*temp.* Núshírwán, 168  
made king instead of  
Ghátkar, vii, 333  
Núshírwán takes counsel  
about, vii, 333  
descent of, from Bahrám  
Gúr, vii, 334  
Núshírwán writes to, vii,  
337  
makes submission to Núsh-  
írwán, vii, 360  
Faghfúr, dynastic title of the  
rulers of Chín and Máchín,  
152, 153, 160; i, 262;  
ii, 383; iv, 11, 135, 196,  
238 *seq.*; v, 221; vi, 35,

Faghfúr—*cont.*

80, 113, 169 *seq.*, 325;  
vii, 310, 343, 408; viii,  
74; ix, 87, 97, 102  
*temp.* Kai Khusráu, helps  
Afrásiyáb, iv, 219  
Khán and, sue to Kai  
Khusráu for peace, iv,  
229  
orders Afrásiyáb to quit  
Khutan and Chín, iv,  
230  
grants facilities to Kai  
Khusráu for his march  
through Chín, iv, 230  
Khán of Chín and, welcome  
Kai Khusráu, iv, 240  
confirmed in the posses-  
sion of Chín and  
Máchín, iv, 252  
*temp.* Sikandar, ambassa-  
dors from, come to Dárá,  
vi, 35  
Sikandar visits as his own  
ambassador, vi, 170  
gives audience to Sikandar,  
vi, 170  
entertains Sikandar, vi, 171  
answers Sikandar, vi, 172  
gifts of, to Sikandar, vi,  
173  
sends envoy with Sikandar,  
vi, 173  
*temp.* Bahrám Gúr, 165  
daughter of, the wife of  
Shangul, vii, 115  
hears of Bahrám Gúr's ex-  
ploits in Hind, vii, 129  
invites Bahrám Gúr to visit  
him, vii, 129  
Bahrám Gúr's reply to, vii,  
130  
*temp.* Núshírwán, viii, 97  
Faghfúr, son of Sáwa, viii, 74,  
75, 120  
confused with Faghfúr of  
Chín, viii, 74  
parley of, with Bahrám  
Chúbína, viii, 112  
head of, on spear, viii,  
132

Failakús (Philip II of Macedon), grandfather in Iránian legend of Sikandar (Alexander the Great), 158, vi, 57, 102, 112, 125, 130, 131, 151, 182; vii, 215; viii, 387

wars with Dáráb, vi, 22

allied with the king of Rús, vi, 22

marches from 'Ammúriya to encounter Dáráb, vi, 23

defeated and returns to 'Ammúriya, vi, 23

sues for peace, vi, 23

agrees to send tribute, and give his daughter in marriage, to Dáráb, 158, vi, 24, 25

adopts Sikandar as his heir, vi, 27

Faith, Faiths, the four, vi, 92, 95

of Christ, Christian, vi, 133, 352, 356

of Áhriman, ii, 358; vi, 281, 290

Faithful, Commander of the, ix, 72

'Umar, the first, ix, 72 and *note*

Fakírs, the, vi, 61

Alexander the Great and, vi, 61

Onesicritus and, vi, 61

Fakká', a kind of drink, i, 43 *note*

Falátún (Plato), vii, 100; viii, 264

Falconry, ii, 108, 196; vi, 176; vii, 42, 48 *seq.*, 54, 55, 76 and *note*

origin of, i, 126

Famine. *See* Drought.

Farab (Fáriyáb? *q.v.*), iv, 185

Farab (Firabr), desert and town on the right bank of the Oxus opposite to Ámwl, *q.v.*, vii, 91, 92

desert of, ix, 115, 118

Fará'in, Iránian chief, vii, 207

Farámarz, son of Rustam, 146, 157, ii, 1, 319, 341 *seq.*, 349, 351, 351; iii, 18, 30, 35, 36, 202, 223, 315, 320, 328; iv, 11, v, 173, 174, 182, 183, 198, 231, 260, 261, 272, 274, 281, 283, 284

parentage of, iii, 323

appointed to expel the Turkmans from Zábulistán, iii, 31

referred to, v, 184

Zawára and, sent by Rustam to bid Zál and Rúdába prepare to receive Asfandiyár, v, 190

slays Mihr-i-Núsh, v, 227

goes to Rustam and Asfandiyár, v, 247

marches against Kábul, v, 274, 276

takes the corpses of Rustam, Zawára, and Rakhsh from the pits, and conveys them to Zábul for burial, v, 274 *seq.*

fights with the king of Kábul and puts him and his kin to death, v, 276, 277

makes a Zábulí king of Kábul, v, 277

returns to Zábul, v, 277

hears of Bahman's invasion and marches against him, v, 287

defeated and put to death, v, 288

Farának, wife of Abtín and mother of Faridún, i, 90, 145, 157

Faridún brought up by, on Birmaya's milk, i, 151 taken by, to Mount Alburz, i, 152

told by, about his origin, i, 153

prays for Faridún's safety, i, 158

- Farának, rejoices over Farídún's success, i, 175  
 gifts of, to Farídún, i, 176
- Farának, daughter of Barzín, vii, 53  
 married to Bahrám Gúr, vii, 53
- Farangís, daughter of Afrásiyáb, wife of Siyáwush, and mother of Kai Khusrau, 145, 146, 148, ii, 270 *seq.*, 288 *seq.*, 299, 306, 373, 381, 386 *seq.*; iii, 96, 117, 203, 211
- Mandane and, identical in legend, ii, 191
- Siyáwush marries, ii, 270
- Afrásiyáb summons, to court, ii, 300 *seq.*
- Siyáwush confides in, ii, 307 *seq.*
- Afrásiyáb appealed to by, ii, 317 *seq.*
- imprisoned, ii, 320
- sentenced, ii, 322
- Pírán saves and takes charge of, ii, 324 *seq.*
- Kai Khusrau born of, ii, 326
- dwells at Siyáwushgird, ii, 333
- instructs Kai Khusrau how to find Bihzád, ii, 374
- gives Gív the mail of Siyáwush, ii, 376
- crosses the Jihún, ii, 392
- provided for by Kai Káuś, ii, 399
- Fariburz marries, iii, 148
- referred to, iii, 146 *seq.*, 202; iv, 205, 213, 216
- death of referred to, iv, 304
- Farát (Euphrates), river, 158, v, 294, 309; vi, 37, 42, 43, 290; viii, 93, 250
- Daráb cast away upon, v, 295
- Faráyín (Guráz, Shahrbaráz *q.v.*), Sháh, 175, ix, 50, 53, 105
- accession-speech of, ix, 52
- counselled by his eldest son, ix, 52
- Faráyín, counselled by his youngest son, ix, 53
- misrule of, ix, 53
- plot against, ix, 54
- Farúriyís (Porphyrogenitus?), Rúman general, 167, vii, 218
- defeated by Núshírwán, vii, 256
- makes report to Cæsar, vii, 260
- Farghán, Rúman architect, and Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 401 *seq.*
- Farghána, region south of the Jaxartes, east of Sughd, iii, 109
- Farghiár, Túránian hero, iii, 250
- goes to spy on Rustam, iii, 250
- reports to Afrásiyáb, iii, 253
- Farhád, Íránian hero, ii, 73, 85, 138, 316, 338, 340; iii, 11, 20, 25, 34, 45, 48, 127, 268, 289, 313, 327, 331, 352; iv, 13, 15, 21, 25, 42, 147, 292
- Parthian origin of, iii, 11
- goes as envoy to the king of Mázandarán, ii, 63
- takes part in the Fight of the Seven Warriors, ii, 111
- steed of, iii, 313
- goes with Rustam to rescue Bízhan, iii, 334
- left in command by Gív, iv, 83
- put in command of the left wing, iv, 92
- left at Gang-bihisht, iv, 219
- Farhád, Íránian general, *temp.* Núshírwán, vii, 251
- commands left wing, vii, 251
- Farhád, lover of Shírín, viii, 192
- Fariburz, son of Kai Káuś, 148, 151, ii, 3, 62, 199, 316, 335, 336, 340, 358, 405 *seq.*, 409; iv, 14, 24, 32, 45, 50, 145 *seq.*, 164, 166, 167, 174, 177, 182, 187,



Fariburz—*cont.*

- 211, 213, 215, 238, 239,  
253, 258, 268, 289, 331;  
iv, 13, 34, 37, 91  
encampment of, described,  
ii, 155  
claims of, to the throne sup-  
ported by Tús, ii, 401,  
iii, 13  
recognises Kai Khusrau as  
Sháh, ii, 410  
Kai Khusrau's letter to,  
iii, 84  
reads to the chiefs Kai  
Khusrau's letter, and  
supersedes Tús, iii, 86  
sends Ruhhám to Pírán, iii,  
87  
obtains an armistice and  
prepares to renew the  
campaign, iii, 89  
fights and is defeated, iii, 90  
returns to Írán, iii, 111  
asks Rustam to support his  
suit to Farangís, iii, 146  
marries Farangís, iii, 148  
leads the van of Rustam's  
expedition to succour Tús,  
iii, 148  
meets Gúdarz, iii, 163  
joins forces with Tús, iii,  
169  
goes to Kai Khusrau with  
tidings of victory, iii, 236  
*seq.*  
returns to the host, iii, 241,  
243  
commands the right wing,  
iv, 24  
superseded *pro tem.* by  
Katmára, iv, 92  
chosen to fight with Kulbád,  
iv, 97  
slays Kulbád, iv, 99  
commands with Tukhár the  
troops from Kháwar, iv,  
148  
slays Fartús, iv, 181  
commands the right, iv, 191  
takes part in the siege of  
Gang-bihisht, iv, 199

- Fariburz, Kai Khusrau remon-  
strated with by, and  
other nobles for refusing  
audience, iv, 275  
Kai Khusrau's gift to, iv,  
295  
sets out with Kai Khusrau  
on his pilgrimage, iv, 306  
refuses to turn back when  
bidden by Kai Khusrau,  
iv, 307  
Kai Khusrau farewells and  
warns, and his comrades,  
iv, 308  
disappears and is sought  
in vain by, and his com-  
rades, iv, 308  
vainly reminds his com-  
rades of Kai Khusrau's  
warning, iv, 309  
end of, iv, 309  
Faridún (Thraétaona), Sháh, son  
of Abtín and Farának, 140,  
141, 153, i, 30, 42, 54, 55,  
90 *seq.*, 142, 286, 336, 341,  
349, 351, 364, 370, 382,  
384, 385; ii, 11, 17, 19,  
21, 29, 33, 36, 37, 99, 193,  
195, 204, 237, 274, 318,  
327, 392, 400, 404; iii,  
21, 37, 245, 257; iv, 17,  
66, 69, 89, 91, 142, 149,  
151, 153, 168, 174, 203,  
204, 221, 222, 255, 259,  
260, 262, 266, 269, 286,  
289, 299, 313, 328; v, 32,  
34, 160, 180, 196, 204  
*seq.*, 245, 260, 261, 271,  
283; vi, 73, 172, 209,  
406; vii, 37, 38, 60, 62,  
73, 79, 101, 120, 199, 207;  
viii, 129, 205, 218, 231,  
242, 260, 300, 376 *seq.*,  
391, 392; ix, 25, 39, 53,  
71, 86, 103  
mythological origin of, i, 171  
*seq.*  
Zahhák's dream of, i, 147  
*seq.*  
advent of, prophesied, i,  
149

Faridún, birth of, i, 150  
 father of, slain by Zahhák, i, 151  
 brought up on the milk of the cow Birmáya, i, 151  
 taken by his mother to Mount Alburz, i, 152  
 palace of, burned by Zahhák, i, 152, 153  
 questions his mother about his origin, i, 152  
 contemplates revenge on Zahhák, i, 154  
 dissuaded by his mother, i, 154  
 Káwa revolts to, i, 157  
 resolves to war with Zahhák, i, 157  
 brothers of, i, 158  
 ox-head mace invented by, i, 158  
 rewards the smiths, i, 158  
 goes to fight Zahhák, i, 159 *seq.*  
 visited and instructed by Surúsh, i, 159  
 life of, attempted by his brothers, i, 160  
 saves himself by his magic power, i, 160  
 van of, led by Káwa, i, 160  
 crosses the Arwand (Dijla, Tigris), i, 160  
 enters Zahhák's capital, i, 161  
 overthrows Zahhák's talisman, i, 161  
 seeks in vain for Zahhák, i, 162  
 finds the sisters of Jamshíd, i, 162  
 hears where Zahhák is, i, 163  
 Story of, and Zahhák's minister (Kundrav), i, 164  
 doings of, reported to Zahhák by Kundrav, i, 165  
 attacked by, and overthrows, Zahhák, i, 168, 288  
 counselled by Surúsh about Zahhák, i, 168, 169

Faridún, becomes Sháh, i, 168  
 fetters Zahhák upon Mount Damáwand, i, 169  
 Reign of, 140, i, 171 *seq.*  
 Note on, i, 171 *seq.*  
 three sons of, i, 174, 177  
 ethnical significance of, i, 54  
 accession of, i, 174  
 holds a feast, i, 175  
 makes a progress through the world, i, 176  
 builds himself a seat, i, 177  
 sends Jandal on a mission, i, 177  
 receives Jandal's report, i, 182  
 instructs his sons how to deal with Sarv, i, 182  
 sons of, outwit Sarv, i, 184  
 receive Sarv's daughters in marriage, i, 185  
 return home, i, 186  
 proved by Faridún, i, 186  
 named by Faridún, i, 187  
 wives of, named by Faridún, i, 188  
 horoscopes of, taken by Faridún, i, 188  
 divides the world among his sons, i, 189  
 grows old, i, 189  
 Salm and Túr write to, to demand the abdication of Íraj, i, 191  
 makes answer to his sons, i, 193  
 holds converse with Íraj, i, 195  
 writes to Salm and Túr, i, 197  
 Íraj's head sent to, i, 202  
 mourning of, for Íraj, i, 203 *seq.*  
 sight of, injured by mourning for Íraj, i, 204  
 hopes for issue from Íraj, i, 205  
 recovers his sight, i, 206  
 gifts of, to Minúchihr, i, 207  
 gives a feast to the nobles, i, 207

- Farídún, receives an embassy from his sons, i, 209  
 makes answer to his sons, i, 211  
 sends Minúchihr to fight with Salm and Túr i, 215  
 hears of Minúchihr's victory, i, 222  
 Minúchihr sends the heads of Salm and Túr to, i, 222, 229  
 welcomes Minúchihr on his return in triumph, i, 230  
 confides Minúchihr to Salm, i, 231  
 gives thanks to God and prays for death, i, 232  
 distributes the spoil to the troops, i, 232  
 enthrones Minúchihr, i, 232  
 passes his last days in austerities, i, 232  
 dies, i, 232  
 burial of, i, 233  
 mourning for, i, 233, 237  
 Firdausi's reflections on, i, 170, 232  
 final warfare of Zakhák with, i, 278, *cf.* 173  
 Mount Sipand besieged by order of, i, 329  
 Grace of, i, 335  
 saying of, ii, 219 and *note*  
 flag of=flag of Káwa, vi, 59  
 capital of, vii, 215, 238  
 Fárikín (Maiyafárikín, Martyropolis), city\* in Roman Armenia, vii, 200  
 taken by Kubád, vii, 200  
 Fáriyáb, city half way between the town of Marvrúd and Balkh, iv, 65  
 Farr, i, 82. *See* Grace.  
 Farruhán (Farrukhán). *See* Faráyín.  
 Farrukh, ruler of Nímrúz, viii, 375  
 Farrukhán (Farruhán). *See* Faráyín.  
 Farrukhánzád (Farrukhzád *q.v.*), viii, 195  
 Farrukh-Hurmuzd (Hurmuzd *q.v.*), father of Rustam, ix, 69  
 Farrukhzád (of glorious birth), name assumed by Gush-tásp in Rúm, iv, 351 *seq.*, 357, 360  
 Farrukhzád, Sháh, 175, ix, 61 *seq.*, 70  
 Siyah Chashm and, ix, 62  
 poisons, ix, 63  
 Farrukhzád (Farrukhánzád *q.v.*), son of Hurmuzd, brother of Rustam, and favourite of Khusrau Parwíz, ix, 23, 87, 92, 95  
 conspires with Guráz, viii, 408, 412  
 goes to the host, viii, 412  
 rebels in favour of Shírwí, viii, 413  
 brother of, viii, 413 and *note*  
 conspires with Tukhár, viii, 414  
 proclaims Shírwí Sháh, viii, 416  
 hears where Khusrau Parwíz is hiding, viii, 419  
 holds talk with Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 420  
 bribes Mihr Hurmuzd to murder Khusrau Parwíz, ix, 33  
 defeats the Arabs, ix, 85  
 counsels Yazdagird, ix, 86, 87  
 leads the host to Khurásán, ix, 89  
 entrusts Yazdagird to Máhwí, ix, 95  
 goes to Rai, ix, 96  
 Farrukhzád, Iránian warrior, viii, 241, 296  
 speech of, viii, 240  
 Farsang (parasang), measure of length, about 3.88 miles, i, 82  
 Farshíward, son of Wísa and brother of Pírán, Túránian hero, 152, i, 92; iii,

Farshídwārd—*cont.*

- 90, 166, 198, 205, 252 ;  
 iv, 7, 10, 119, 122, 125,  
 133, 153, 160, 162  
 summons Pírán to save  
 Farangís, ii, 322  
 commands with Lahhák the  
 right wing, iv, 26  
 attacks the Iránians in  
 flank, iv, 82  
 opposed by Zanga, iv, 83  
 goes to help Pírán and  
 attacks Gív, iv, 85  
 prowess of, iv, 86  
 fights with Guráza, iv, 87  
 Bízhan, iv, 87  
 Lahhák and, put in joint  
 command, iv, 84  
 Pírán's instructions to,  
 iv, 95  
 hear of the death of Pírán  
 and the coming of Kai  
 Khusráu, iv, 112  
 lament for Pírán, iv, 112  
 take counsel with the  
 host, iv, 113  
 fight and escape Iránian  
 outpost, iv, 116  
 referred to, iv, 118, 120,  
 126  
 repose themselves, iv, 121  
 corpses of, brought back  
 by Bízhan, iv, 126, 132  
 deaths of, announced to  
 Afrásiyáb, iv, 152  
 Farshídwārd, brother of Asfan-  
 diyár, 155, v, 20, 22, 110,  
 114, 141, 171  
 governor of Khurásán, v, 77  
 stationed on the Iránian  
 right, v, 94  
 mortally wounded by Kuh-  
 ram, v, 95, 101, 104  
 Asfandiyár laments for, v,  
 101, 104  
 resolves to avenge, v, 104  
 dies, v, 104  
 shrouded by Asfandiyár, v,  
 105  
 Farshídwārd, a miser, 164, vii,  
 67 *seq.*

- Farshídwārd, a miser, Bahrám  
 Gúr visits, vii, 68 *seq.*  
 pretended destitution of,  
 vii, 68 *seq.*  
 wealth of, described, vii, 70,  
 72, 73  
 Fartús, Túránian hero, iii, 182,  
 213, 231, 251  
 comes to aid Pírán, iii, 152  
 hears of the coming of  
 Rustam, iii, 175  
 slain by Fariburz, iv, 181  
 Farúd, son of Siyáwush and  
 Jaríra daughter of Pírán,  
 and half brother of Kai  
 Khusráu, 145, 147, i, 92,  
 370 ; ii, 3, 291 ; iii, 8, 14,  
 42 *seq.*, 72, 85, 87, 93, 107,  
 111 *seq.* ; iv, 42, 135 ;  
 v, 30  
 birth of, ii, 291  
 hostility of Tús to, iii, 13  
 Story of, 147, iii, 37 *seq.*  
 referred to, iii, 39  
 advised by Tukhár, iii, 47,  
 52 *seq.*  
 interview of, with Bahrám,  
 iii, 47 *seq.*  
 birth-mark of, iii, 49  
 gives his mace to Bahrám,  
 iii, 50  
 eighty slaves of, the, iii, 55  
 their mockery of Tús, iii,  
 56  
 their mockery of Gív, iii,  
 58  
 slays the steed of Tús, iii, 56  
 wounds the steed of Gív, iii,  
 58  
 slays the steed of Bízhan,  
 iii, 61  
 worsted by Bízhan, iii, 62  
 attacks the Iránians, iii, 63  
 prowess of, iii, 64  
 mortally wounded, iii, 64  
 dies, iii, 65  
 mother and slaves of,  
 destroy themselves, iii, 66  
 burial of, iii, 68  
 Kai Khusráu's grief for, iii,  
 84 *seq.*, 112

- Farúd, son of Shírfn and Khusrau Parwíz, ix, 39  
 Farukhzád. *See* Farrukhzád.  
 Farwardín, genius, i, 88; iii, 287, 328  
   name of month and day, i, 88, 133, 263; iii, 230, 286, 317, 323; vi, 375; vii, 363; viii, 367, 371  
   origin of, iii, 286  
 Faryán, king, father-in-law of Kaidrúsh, 159, vi, 66, 67, 124 *seq.*, 171, 172  
   city of, taken by Sikandar, vi, 124  
   slain, vi, 125  
   daughter and son-in-law of, taken prisoners, vi, 125  
   brought before Naitkún, vi, 126  
   sentenced to death, vi, 126  
   pardoned, vi, 126  
 Fásakún, forest in Rúm, iv, 333, 335 *seq.*  
   Wolf of, 154  
   described, iv, 333, 336  
   Mírín bidden by Cæsar to slay, iv, 333  
   Gushtásp undertakes to slay, iv, 336  
   keeps tusks of, iv, 338  
   tusks of, produced before Cæsar by Hishwí, iv, 351  
   referred to, iv, 359  
 Fátima, daughter of Muhammad and wife of 'Alí, i, 12  
 Fazl. *See* Abú'l 'Abbás Fazl.  
 Feast. *See* Mihrgán, Naurúz, New Year's Day, Sada.  
 Ferghána. *See* Farghána.  
 Fight of the Seven Warriors, 143, ii, 82, 107 *seq.*  
 Firdausí, Persian poet and author of the Sháhnáma, 146, 154, 155, 160, 173, i, 3, 22 *seq.*; ii, 9, 10, 82, 119; iii, 11, 108, 271, 272; iv, 136, 138, 314, 316; v, 10, 20 *seq.*, 29, 282; vi, 16, 17, 64 *seq.*,

Firdausí—*cont.*

- 72, 78, 80 *seq.*, 197, 198, 202, 250, 254, 294, 313, 315, 321 *seq.*, 326, 328, 368; vii 3, 4, 6, 153, 156, 159, 185, 186, 188, 213, 214, 217 *seq.*, 317; viii, 71, 73, 74, 187, 190, 192, 193, ix, 69  
 materials for the life of, i, 23 *seq.*  
 personal references of, in the Sháhnáma, i, 24 *seq.*  
   conclusions from, i, 35  
 date of birth of, i, 24  
 Muhammadan of the Shí'ite sect, i, 24, 106, 107  
 fond of wine, i, 25; iv, 313; v, 164, vi, 291, 306, 309, 314, 362, 369; vii, 277  
 owned or occupied land, i, 25; vi, 411; ix 112  
 escape of, from drowning, i, 26, 29  
 son of, i, 26; viii, 190  
   referred to (?), i, 27; vii, 277, 311  
   death of, 173, i, 26; viii, 190  
 complains of old age, 160, i, 26; ii, 336; iv, 141; v, 262; vii, 220  
 patrons, friends and helpers of, i, 29 *seq.*, 35, 39, 110; ix, 121  
 exempted from taxation, i, 35, 39; ix, 121  
 Nizámí's account of, i, 38 *seq.*, 45  
 later legends of, iii, 15, 109, 191; iv, 8  
 Dakíkí, and. *See* Dakíkí.  
 Mahmúd and, *See* Mahmúd.  
 Satire of. *See* Mahmúd.  
 Sháhnáma of. *See* Sháhnáma.  
 Yúsuf and Zulíkha of, i, 45  
 admits Muhammadan traditions into Sháhnáma, viii, 42

- Firdausí, and rhyme-word, viii, 397, *note*  
 account of Arab conquest by, supplemented, ix, 65  
 Yazdagird's death, ix, 70, 107  
 reflections on, ix, 108, 111  
 on completion of Sháhnáma, ix, 121  
 time spent on Sháhnáma, ix, 122  
 praise of Sultán Mahmúd. *See* Mahmúd  
 Fire, ancient cult of the Aryans, i, 7, 49, 56  
 priests of. *See* Magi.  
 region of, ii, 56  
 Húshang's discovery of, i, 123  
 institution of the Cult of, i, 116, 123  
 Feast of Sada, i, 124  
 ordeal by, 144, ii, 218 *seq.*  
 sacred, vi, 21, 201, 212  
 Fire—fane or temple, 154. *See* Ázar Abádagán, Ázar-gashasp, Barzín.  
 —worship, abolition of, prophesied, viii, 68  
 Fíruz, Iránian king, iv, 149  
 Fíruzábád. *See* Gúr.  
 Fíruzi Kuh, pass in the Alburz range, ii, 28  
 Fish, mythological, i, 71, 72, 148, 252; ii, 15, 299; iv, 279; vii, 341 and *note*, 406; viii, 212 and *note*  
 salt, the, legend of, vi, 76 *seq.*  
 —eaters. *See* Ichthyophagi.  
 Fleece, Golden. *See* Golden.  
 Flesh-meats, introduction of, attributed to Áhriman, i, 138  
 Flight, of Muhammad, referred to, ix, 122  
 Flying-machine, of Kai Káuś, ii, 103  
 Fo-lin, vi, 73 and *note*  
 Footman (pawn), piece in chess, vii, 385  
 position of, vii, 388  
 move of, vii, 422  
 promotion of, vii, 422  
 Ford and toll-house of Zark, ix, 100 and *note*, 116  
 Fort, hill, Malcolm's description of a, i, 236  
 Fortifications vitrified vi, 79, 165  
 Fount of Life, the, vi, 74 *seq.*, 158 *seq.*  
 Sikandar's expedition to, vi, 158 *seq.*  
 account of, in the Pseudo-Callisthenes, vi, 74 *seq.*  
 Sikandar fails to find, vi, 160  
 Founts, the Seven, viii, 392  
 Four, Wonders of Kaid. *See* Kaid.  
 Faiths, vi, 91, 95  
 Frangrasyan (Afrásiyáb, *q.v.*), i, 338; ii, 81, 189; iv, 137, 138  
 Frashókart, son of Gushtasp, v, 26  
 Frásiyáv (Afrásiyáb, *q.v.*), i, 338; ii, 81  
 Fravashí, i, 369; ii, 82; iii, 286  
 Frazdánava, lake or river, v, 13  
 Frúbá, sacred Fire, vi, 201, 255  
 Funj, leader of Khán's host, *temp.* Núshírwán, vii, 330  
 Fúr (Porus, *q.v.*), dynastic title and Indian king, *temp.* Sikandar, 159, vi, 31, 51, 62, 64, 110, *seq.* 123, 132, 135, 137, 170, 172, 175; vii, 395  
 Dará's letter to, vi, 50  
 Sikandar's war with, vi, 67, 112 *seq.*  
 routed by Sikandar's iron steeds, vi, 116  
 single combat of, with Sikandar, vi, 117  
 slain, vi, 117  
 troops of, submit to Sikandar, vi, 118

Furúhul, Íránian hero, 151, iv,  
24, 33  
chosen to fight with Zan-  
gula, iv, 97  
slays Zangula, iv, 101

## G

GABRIEL, angel, i, 114; iv, 140;  
vi, 138 *note*

Gahán (Kahan, town above  
Juwayn on the Farah  
river which flows into  
the northern end of the  
Lake of Zirih in Sístán?)  
149, iii, 152, 177, 224, 225

Gahár, Túránian hero, 149, iii,  
216, 224, 251  
comes to aid Píran, iii, 152  
slain by Rustam, iii, 225

Gaiúmart, the first Sháh and  
culture-hero, and the first  
man in Zoroastrian tradi-  
tion, 139, i, 90, 91, 116,  
123; vi, 208; viii, 24,  
55, 260, 269, 310, 376  
Reign of, i, 117 *seq.*

Note on, i, 117

greatness of, i, 118

culture-hero, i, 118

son of, i, 119

slain by Black Dív, i, 120

envied by Áhriman, i, 119

warned by Surúsh, i, 119

grief of, for the death of  
Siyámak, i, 120

bidden by Surúsh to avenge  
Siyámak, i, 120

goes with Húshang to fight  
Black Dív, i, 121

death of, i, 121

Firdausi's reflections on, i,  
121

rites of, vii, 53

Faith of, vii, 273; vii, 277

Galbwí, Íránian chief, ix, 74

Galfnúsh, put in charge of Khus-  
rau Parwíz, viii, 421; ix,  
5, 11, 12

parley of, with Kharrád and  
Ashtád, ix, 12 *seq.*

Gandarep, monster, i, 143  
slain by Keresáspa, i, 172,  
173

Gang, mountain, iv, 162; v, 216  
Gang, sea of, ii, 362

Gang, stronghold in Túrán and  
seat of Afrásiyáb, ii, 241,  
261, 309, 344, 357, 369;  
iii, 236, 253; iv, 258

king of=Afrásiyáb, iv, 134

two places known as, iv, 136

=Gang-bihisht *q.v.*, iv, 190,

195, 197, 198, 202, 208,

218, 220, 221, 229, 232

=Gang-dizh *q.v.*, iv, 247

Gang-bihisht, north of the Jax-  
artes, stronghold and seat  
of Afrásiyáb, 152, iv, 135,  
136, 207 *seq.*, 228

Afrásiyáb at, iv, 187

marches from, iv, 190

returns to, iv, 196

described, iv, 195

prepared for a siege by  
Afrásiyáb, iv, 197

besieged by Kai Khusrau,  
iv, 198, 208 *seq.*

taken by storm, iv, 209 *seq.*  
occupied by Kai Khusrau  
for a while, iv, 218

Gúdarz left in command of,  
iv, 219

Gustaham, son of Naudar,  
left in command of, iv, 238,  
Kai Khusrau dwells for a  
year in, iv, 254

Gang-dizh (Gang-i-Siyáwush),  
stronghold, 145, 153, iv,  
135, 136, 186 *note*, 203,  
257, 264; ix, 25

possible identification of, ii,  
189

meaning of, ii, 19

building and description of,  
ii, 279 *seq.*

Afrásiyáb takes refuge at,  
iv, 230

Kai Khusrau resolves to  
pursue Afrásiyáb to, iv,  
231

marches to, iv, 247

- Gangdizh, Kai Khusrâu, forbids his troops to injure, iv, 247 enters, iv, 248 remains a year at, iv, 249 advised by his paladins to leave, iv, 249 appoints a governor for, iv, 249 distributes treasure at, iv, 250
- Gang-i-Dizhukht (Baitu'l Mukaddas *q.v.*), i, 161, 226
- Gang-i-Siyâwush. *See* Gangdizh.
- Ganges, Indian river, vi, 64
- Garâmk-kart. *See* Girâmî.
- Garcha, Tûrânian hero, iii, 152 comes to aid Pîrân, iii, 152
- Garden of the Hesperides, vi, 74 Indians, viii, 196
- Gardener, a, vi, 341 entertains Shâpûr son of Urmuzd, vi, 341 *seq.* sent by Shâpûr to the high priest, vi, 344 describes Shâpûr, vi, 344 rewarded by Shâpûr, vi, 357
- Gargwî, Irânian hero, v, 109 commands the left, v, 109
- Garib, surface-measure, vii, 215 and *note*
- Garshâsp. *See* Keresâspa.
- Garshâsp, son of Zav, Shâh, 142, i, 90, 91, 174; ii, 336 Reign of, i, 373 *seq.* Note on, i, 373 relation of, to Keresâsp, i, 174 accession of, i, 374 death of, i, 375
- Garshâsp, Irânian hero, i, 42, 144, 207, 212, 214, 239, 345; ii, 4; iii, 260, 273; v, 202 relation of, to Keresâspa, i, 174
- Garshâsp, Irânian chief, *temp.* Shâpûr son of Ardshîr, vi, 297 single combat of, with Bazânûsh, vi, 297
- Garshâsp, Irânian noble, *temp.* Nûshîrwân, viii, 18
- Garsîwaz, brother of Afrâsiyâb, 145, 150, 153, i, 92, 342, 349; ii, 3, 188, 189, 193, 195, 228, 231 *seq.*, 249, 253, 264, 268, 269, 286, 289 *seq.*, 313 *seq.*; iii, 197, 208, 306, 310, 350, 352; iv, 10, 135 *seq.*, 209 *seq.*, 252, 268; vi, 325; ix, 103 defeated by Siyâwush, ii, 229 *seq.* sues for peace to Siyâwush, ii, 237 *seq.* fails to string the bow of Siyâwush, ii, 266 visits Siyâwush, ii, 289 *seq.* envies Siyâwush, ii, 292 *seq.* challenges Siyâwush, ii, 294 slanders Siyâwush, ii, 296 *seq.* betrays Siyâwush, ii, 301 *seq.* compasses the death of Siyâwush, ii, 315 *seq.* charged with the execution of Farangis, ii, 322 goes to Manîzha's palace, iii, 301 finds Bîzhan, iii, 302 takes Bîzhan before Afrâsiyâb, iii, 303 ordered to execute Bîzhan, iii, 304 imprison Bîzhan, iii, 309 disgrace Manîzha, iii, 309 put in charge of the elephants, iv, 156 reinforces Afrâsiyâb, iv, 181 Jahn and, compel Afrâsiyâb to quit the field, iv, 182 commands the rear, iv, 191 taken prisoner by Rustam at the storming of Gangbihisht, iv, 210 referred to, iv, 211 sent to Kai Kâûs, iv, 233 imprisoned, iv, 235



- Garsiwaz, sent for by Kai Káuś  
and Kai Khusrau, and put  
to the torture, iv, 265  
voice of, attracts Afrá-  
siyáb from lake, iv, 265  
holds converse with Afrá-  
siyáb, iv, 266  
slain by Kai Khusrau, iv,  
269
- Garsiyún, Íránian chief, ix, 115
- Gashan, as rhyme-word, viii,  
397 *note*
- Gashasp, Íránian chief, vi, 394  
addresses the nobles on the  
succession to the throne,  
vi, 394
- Gashasp, Íránian general, *temp.*  
Núshírwán, vii, 251  
put in charge of baggage-  
train, vii, 251
- Gashasp, Íránian noble, viii, 17,  
18
- Gashasp, father in Sháhnáma of  
Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 76,  
99, 162, 169, 304
- Gashasp, father of Ashtád *q.v.*,  
ix, 11
- Gáthas, ii, 8; v, 11, 12, 17
- Gaugamela, village near Nineveh,  
vi, 31, 32 *note*  
battle of, vi, 31
- Gaumata (the false Smerdis),  
Magus, vi, 207  
usurpation, and death of, i,  
58  
overthrow of, celebrated at  
the Magophonia, i, 59
- Gav, king of Hind, 169, vii, 395  
*seq.*  
mother of, vii, 395 *seq.*  
two marriages of, vii, 395,  
396  
two sons of, vii, 395,  
396  
becomes queen, vii, 397  
tries to keep peace be-  
tween her sons, vii, 397  
*seq.*  
hears of the death of Tal-  
hand, vii, 419  
reproaches Gav, vii, 420
- Gav, mother of, chess invented  
to appease, vii, 421  
death of, vii, 423  
birth of, vii, 395  
tutor of, vii, 397, 398, 401,  
402, 407, 408, 410, 413,  
417, 421  
rivalry between Talhand  
and, vii, 397 *seq.*  
war between Talhand and,  
vii, 404 *seq.*  
attempts of, at accommoda-  
tion with Talhand, vii,  
405, 408, 413  
defeats Talhand, vii, 412  
proposes a decisive battle to  
Talhand, vii, 414  
victory of, vii, 416  
invents chess to console his  
mother for the death of  
Talhand, vii, 421
- Gaza, city in south-western  
Palestine, vi, 30  
siege of, by Alexander the  
Great, vi, 30
- Gazdaham, Íránian hero and  
castellan of White Castle,  
144, i, 369; ii, 131, 132,  
134, 138, 139, 145, 146;  
iii, 15, 25, 33, 40, 45, 294;  
iv, 13, 24, 149  
besieged by Bármán, i, 354  
relieved by Káran, i, 354  
Suhráb described by, ii, 136  
evacuates White Castle, ii,  
137
- Gedrosia (Makrán, Balúchistán),  
vi, 69
- Gelani. *See* Gílán.
- Gemini, constellation, vi, 155;  
viii, 86, 203; ix, 73
- Genealogical tables  
Pishdádian dynasty, i, 90,  
91  
Kaiánian dynasty, ii, 3  
Sásánian dynasty, vi, 3  
Kings and heroes of Túrán,  
i, 92  
Íránian heroes, ii, 4
- Genealogies, fictitious, v, 282,  
290, 293; vi, 199, 211

- Genealogies, of Pápak in Tabarí,  
vi, 200  
    Mas'údí, vi, 200
- Geography, Firdausí's, ii, 28  
    Darmesteter on, ii, 79, 80
- Geometrician, vi, 377
- Geopothros (Gotarzes *q.v.*), iii, 9
- George, Armenian general, viii,  
195
- Germanus, vii, 218
- Germany, vi, 73
- Gharcha (Georgia), country be-  
tween the Caucasus and  
the Aras, iv, 14, 65  
    king of, iv, 149
- Gharchís (Georgians), vii, 94
- Ghátakar, ruler of the Haitálíans,  
*q.v.*, 168; vii, 334, 335  
    hears of, and destroys, the  
    Khán's embassy to Núsh-  
    írwán, vii, 330  
    prepares to oppose the Khán  
    vii, 330  
    defeated, vii, 332
- Ghaznín, city in Afghánistán,  
the capital of Sultán  
Mahmúd, i, 20, 257; iv,  
14; v, 173; vii, 173
- Chee, clarified butter, vi, 105
- Ghúl, a sorceress, i, 42; v, 117,  
128  
    referred to, v, 121  
    described, v, 130  
    slain by Asfandiyár, v, 131
- Ghundi, a dív, ii, 44, 54, 55,  
93; iii, 256; iv, 296;  
v, 204
- Ghúr, district in Afghánistán  
between Harát and Ghaz-  
nín, ii, 101.
- Ghuz, a Turkish tribe and desert  
east of Gurgán, iv, 60
- Gíl, Gílán, district on the south-  
west coast of the Caspian,  
167, i, 230, 231; ii, 226,  
203; iv, 148, 265; v, 13;  
vi, 227; vii, 224, 340,  
362, ix, 93  
    river of = Kizil Uzun, also  
    called Safid Rúd, iv, 154  
    waters of = Caspian, i, 230
- Gíl, Afrásiyáb's camp in, iv, 155  
    Núshírwán's dealings with,  
    vii, 216, 242 *seq.*  
    captives from, settled at  
    Súrsán, vii, 328
- Gimírrá. *See* Kimmerians.
- Gipsies, the, 165, vii, 6  
    Noldeke on, vii, 6  
    language of, vii, 6  
    brought into Irán by Bah-  
    rám Gúr, vii, 149
- Girámí (Garámik-kart), son of  
Jámásp, 155, v, 24 *seq.*, 58  
    death of, foretold by Jám-  
    ásp, v, 50  
    worsts Námkhást, v, 59  
    rescues Káwa's flag, v, 59  
    slain, v, 59
- Giravgard, Túránian stronghold  
on the Oxus, iii, 73, 80  
    occupied by the Iránians,  
    iii, 78
- Girduni, Sirdarra, pass in the  
Alburz range, ii, 28; vi,  
32  
    Sawachi, pass in the Alburz  
    range, ii, 28
- Girdkuh, fortress, v, 30
- Girih (Jirrah), place south of  
Shíráz, vi, 199
- Gív, Iránian hero, son of Gúdarz,  
and father of Bízhan, 146-  
151, 154, ii, 4, 25, 33, 35,  
38, 62, 70, 73, 85, 91, 127,  
138 *seq.*, 148, 151, 158,  
160, 188, 193, 197, 271,  
318, 319, 338, 340, 349,  
351, 362, 388 *seq.*; iii, 11,  
13, 18, 19, 27, 33, 45, 48,  
*seq.* 57, 67, 75, 76, 81, 85,  
86, 89 *seq.*, 96, 101 *seq.*,  
108, 111, 114 *seq.*, 121 *seq.*,  
127, 129, 130, 133, 139  
*seq.*, 143, 154, 155, 157,  
159, 161, 169, 170, 182,  
183, 187, 206, 211, 227,  
231, 238, 244, 245, 247,  
248, 253, 255, 259, 264,  
268, 273, 289, 291, 292,  
294, 296 *seq.*, 302, 305,

Gív—*cont.*

307 *seq.*, 311 *seq.*, 330 *seq.*,  
 337 *seq.*, 350, 353 *seq.*;  
 iv, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 19  
*seq.*, 26 *seq.*, 39 *seq.*, 52,  
 54, 56, 59, 69, 82 *seq.*, 90,  
 99, 102, 136, 147, 157, 223,  
 226, 227, 233 *seq.*, 292,  
 296, 306 *seq.*; v, 207,  
 208; vi, 194; viii, 168  
 meaning of, ii, 335  
 historical character, iii, 9  
 relationship of, to Rustam,  
 ii, 155, 365, 384; iii, 323  
 son of Gúdarz, ii, 158  
 wife of, ii, 365, 384; iii, 323  
 sister of, ii, 384; iii, 323  
 father of Bízhan, ii, 366  
 and *note*  
 solicitude of, for Bízhan,  
 iii, 15  
 harries Mázandarán, ii, 39  
 taken prisoner in Mázan-  
 darán, ii, 40  
 released by Rustam, ii, 58  
 taken prisoner in Hámá-  
 varán, ii, 90  
 released by Rustam, ii, 97  
 goes in search of Kai Káuś,  
 ii, 104  
 takes part in the Fight of  
 the Seven Warriors, ii,  
 107 *seq.*  
 bears letter from Káuś to  
 Rustam, ii, 139  
 encampment of, described,  
 ii, 155  
 helps to saddle Rakhsh for  
 the fight with Suhráb, ii,  
 160  
 Suhráb described by, ii, 166  
 quarrels with Tús over the  
 future mother of Siyá-  
 wush, iii, 194  
 sent by Gúdarz to seek Kai  
 Khusrau, ii, 364 *seq.*  
 finds Kai Khusrau, ii, 370  
 receives the mail of Siyá-  
 wush, ii, 377  
 exploits of, in defence of  
 Kai Khusrau, ii, 378 *seq.*

Gív, tells how he captured  
 Pírán's wife and sister, ii,  
 383  
 overthrows Pírán and his  
 host, ii, 385  
 releases Pírán, ii, 387  
 at the Jíhún, ii, 391 *seq.*  
 announces Kai Khusrau's  
 arrival in Írán, ii, 394  
 accompanies Kai Khusrau  
 to Ispahán, ii, 396  
 rewarded by Kai Káuś, ii,  
 399  
 goes on an embassy to Tús, ii,  
 400  
 bears Kai Khusrau's letter  
 to the castle of Bahman,  
 ii, 408  
 undertakes to slay Tazháv,  
 iii, 28  
 burn the barricade at the  
 Kása rúd, iii, 29  
 horse of, wounded by Farúd,  
 iii, 58  
 lends Bízhan the mail of  
 Siyáwush, iii, 60, 69  
 sees Paláshán approaching,  
 iii, 69  
 burns the barricade at the  
 Kása rúd, iii, 73  
 parleys with Tazháv, iii, 75  
 rouses the Íránians, iii, 81  
 rallies the host, iii, 91  
 many kindred of, slain, iii, 94  
 urges Bahrám not to return  
 to the battlefield, iii, 96  
 goes in quest of Bahrám, iii,  
 102  
 takes Tazháv captive, iii,  
 102  
 buries Bahrám, iii, 104  
 made adviser to Tús, iii, 116  
 interrupts Tús' parley with  
 Húmán, iii, 122  
 raids Khutan, iii, 247  
 steed of, iii, 257  
 worsted by Púládward, iii,  
 258  
 interferes in the fight  
 between Rustam and  
 Púládward, iii, 263

- Giv, opposes Bízhan's expedition to Irmán, iii, 291  
 questions Gurgín about Bízhan, iii, 311  
 wroth with Gurgín, iii, 314  
 appeals to Kai Khusrau, iii, 315  
 comforted by Kai Khusrau, iii, 315, 318  
 sent to summon Rustam, iii, 319  
 met by Zál, iii, 321  
 tells Bízhan's case to Rustam, iii, 322  
 announces Rustam's approach to Kai Khusrau, iii, 326  
 goes to welcome Rustam, iii, 353  
 holds parley with Pírán, iv, 20  
 overtures of, rejected and returns to Gúdarz, iv, 21  
 commands the rear, iv, 24  
 referred to, iv, 39  
 tries to stop Bízhan from fighting Húmán, iv, 40, 43  
 over-ruled by Gúdarz, iv, 43  
 refuses to lend Bízhan the mail of Siyáwush, iv, 43  
 repents of his refusal, iv, 44  
 son of=Bízhan, iv, 76  
 ordered to dispatch troops to oppose Lahhák and Farshíward, iv, 82  
 sends Zanga and Gurgín, iv, 83  
 leaves Farhád in command and attacks with Bízhan Pírán's centre, iv, 83  
 defeats Rúín, iv, 84  
 fights with Pírán, iv, 84  
 attacked by Lahhák and Farshíward, iv, 85  
 superseded *pro tem.* by Shídúsh, iv, 92  
 chosen to fight with Gurwí, iv, 97
- Giv, takes Gurwí prisoner, iv, 100  
 opposes Bízhan's going to help Gustaham, iv, 119  
 consents to Bízhan's going to help Gustaham, iv, 120  
 brings Gurwí before Kai Khusrau, iv, 127  
 given a command, iv, 149  
 commands the rear, iv, 191  
 takes part in the siege of Gang-bihisht, iv, 199  
 goes with the captives to Kai Káuś, iv, 233  
 gives Kai Káuś tidings of Kai Khusrau, iv, 234  
 rewarded by Kai Káuś, iv, 236  
 returns to Gang-bihisht with letter for Kai Khusrau, iv, 238  
 made governor of the country between the sea and Gang-dizh, iv, 246  
 welcomes Kai Khusrau on his return from Gang-dizh, iv, 250  
 rewarded by Kai Khusrau, iv, 252  
 Gúdarz and, meet Húm, iv, 263  
 hear of Húm's adventure with Afrásiyáb, iv, 263  
 Kai Khusrau remonstrated with by, and other nobles for refusing audience, iv, 275  
 sent by Gúdarz to summon Zál and Rustam, iv, 278  
 bidden with other chiefs by Kai Khusrau to make an assembly on the plain, iv, 291 *seq.*  
 Kai Khusrau's gift to, iv, 295  
 receives grant of Kum and Ispahán, iv, 298  
 sets out with Kai Khusrau on his pilgrimage, iv, 306  
 refuses to turn back when bidden by Kai Khusrau, iv, 307

- Gív, Kai Khusrau farewells and warns, and his comrades, iv, 308  
disappears and is sought in vain by, and his comrades, iv, 308  
end of, iv, 309  
grief of Gúdarz for, iv, 310, 312
- Gívgán, Íránian hero, ii, 109, 155; iii, 34; iv, 24
- Gloom, the (Land of Darkness), 160, v, 30; vi, 79  
conception of, vi, 73  
visited by Asfandiyár, v, 76  
Sikandar's expedition to, vi, 74 *seq.*  
account of, in the Pseudo-Callisthenes, vi, 74 *seq.*  
Sikandar hears of, vi, 158  
enters, vi, 159 *seq.*  
emerges from, vi, 162  
jewels of, vi, 162
- Glory, the divine. *See* Grace.
- Glove, The, Browning's poem of, referred to, vi, 384 *note*
- Go-between, old woman as, i, 280 *seq.*
- Gog and Magog (Yájúj and Májúj, *q.v.*), the barbarous nomads of northern Asia, i, 16; vi, 78
- Golden, Age, i, 129, 134  
boot, iv, 34, 180, 243, 282, 300, 359  
Fleece, land of the, i, 57
- Gomer. *See* Kimmerians.
- Good Thoughts, Words, and Deeds, Zoroastrian formula, 169, vii, 317, 318  
symbolised in the game of nard, vii, 381
- Gordyene, kingdom, south of Armenia, vi, 198
- Gotarzes, Parthian king and Íránian hero (Gúdarz, *q.v.*), iii, 109  
memorial tablet of, iii, 9  
Geopothros, iii, 9  
coin of, iii, 9
- Gotarzes, war of, with Vardanes, iii, 10, 11  
Meherdates, iii, 10 *seq.*  
character of, in history, iii, 10
- Grace or Glory, the divine, i, 113, 114, 116, 123, 130 *seq.*, and *passim*  
account of, i, 82  
visible appearances of, i, 82, 130, 374, 385; vi, 221 *seq.*
- Granicus, river in Asia Minor flowing into the Propontis (Sea of Marmara), vi, 30  
battle of the, vi, 30, 31
- Grapes, bunch of, Kubád and the, vii, 183 *note*
- Greece, vi, 30
- Greed and Need, personification of, vi, 146; vii, 71, 205, 206, 368, 369
- Greek, Greeks, i, 10; v, 282; vi, 82  
relations of, with the Íránians, i, 14  
history and legend in relation to Persian dto, ii, 9  
conception of India, vi, 68  
captives, mutilation of, by the Persians, vi, 373  
philosophers entertained by Núshírwán, vii, 280
- Green, Prophet, the, *See* Al Khidr.  
sea, the, vi, 174 *note*, viii, 46 and *note*
- Gretna Green, vi, 323 *note*
- Griffon, fabulous bird, i, 235 and *note*
- Gúdarz, son of Kishwád, Íránian hero, and father of Gív, a reminiscence of the Parthian king Gotarzes, *q.v.*, 146, 148, 151-153, i, 42; ii, 4, 33, 35, 38, 62, 70, 73, 83, 91, 127, 138, 142, 157, 177, 178, 193, 250, 286, 290, 316, 318, 335, 338, 340, 349, 371 *seq.*, 384,

## Gudarz---cont.

388, 394, 406; iii, 8, 11,  
15, 18, 19, 24, 28, 33, 38,  
40, 45 *seq.*, 50, 51, 67, 81  
*seq.*, 85, 88 *seq.*, 100, 111,  
112, 115, 117, 118, 120,  
123, 126, 127, 129 *seq.*,  
134, 136, 137, 139, 143,  
145, 149 *seq.*, 154 *seq.*,  
164, 169, 172, 177, 187,  
205, 206, 211 *seq.*, 220,  
225, 232, 236, 246, 253,  
254, 255, 258, 264, 268,  
273, 277, 289, 298, 302,  
305, 308, 322, 327, 329  
*seq.*, 337 *seq.*, 354, 357  
iv, 7, 13, 79, 80, 85, 88  
*seq.*, 102, 103, 106 *seq.*,  
113 *seq.*, 136, 145 *seq.*,  
149, 157, 162, 171, 180,  
191, 206, 226, 227, 292,  
299; v, 207, 208; vi,  
194; viii, 104, 168; ix,  
23  
taken prisoner in Mázan-  
darán, ii, 40  
released by Rustam, ii, 58  
receives Ispahán from Kai  
Káuś, ii, 78  
taken prisoner in Hámá-  
varán, ii, 90  
released by Rustam, ii, 97  
censures Kai Káuś, ii, 105  
takes part in the Fight of  
the Seven Warriors, ii, 107  
mediates between Kai Káuś  
and Rustam, ii, 144 *seq.*  
encampment of, described,  
ii, 153  
sons and grandsons of, ii,  
158; iii, 33; ix, 25  
loss of, iii, 83 *note*, 94,  
131; iv, 310, 312  
survivors of, iv, 298  
consoles Siyáwush for his  
mother's death, ii, 199  
appointed ruler of Sughd  
and Sipanjáb, ii, 358  
returns to Írán, ii, 362  
sees Surúsh in a dream, ii,  
363

Gúdarz, sends Gív to seek for  
Kai Khusrau, ii, 364  
hears of Kai Khusrau's  
arrival in Írán, ii, 395  
welcomes Kai Khusrau and  
Gív, ii, 396  
accompanies them to Is-  
takhr, ii, 399  
dispute of, with Tús, ii, 400  
*seq.*  
goes with Kai Khusrau to  
the castle of Bahman, ii,  
407  
advises Tús to avoid  
Kalát, iii, 41  
supersedes Tús, iii, 83  
informs Kai Khusrau about  
Farúd and the defeat of  
the Íránians, iii, 83  
sends Bízhan for Káwa's  
standard, iii, 92  
Íránian watchman and, iii,  
156 *seq.*  
meets Fariburz, iii, 163  
Rustam, iii, 171  
warns Rustam not to trust  
Pírán, iii, 212  
sends Rulhám to help Rus-  
tam, iii, 227  
praises Rustam, iii, 248  
steeds of, iii, 313  
goes to welcome Rustam,  
iii, 353  
sent to invade Túrán by Kai  
Khusrau, iv, 15  
ordered to negotiate with  
Pírán, iv, 15  
negotiations failing, marches  
from Raibad to meet  
Pírán, iv, 22  
arrays his host, iv, 24  
gives the right wing to  
Fariburz, iv, 24  
baggage to Hajír, iv, 24  
left wing to Rulhám, iv,  
24  
rear to Gív, iv, 24  
posts a watchman on the  
mountain-top, iv, 25  
takes his station at the cen-  
tre, iv, 24

- Gúdarz, counsels Bízhan as to his fight with Húmán, iv, 41  
 over-rules Gív's objections, iv, 43  
 rewards Bízhan, iv, 52  
 prepares to resist a night-attack, iv, 53  
 gives a force to Bízhan, iv, 54  
 joins battle with Pírán, iv, 55  
 writes to Kai Khusrau, iv, 56  
 sends Hajír with the letter, iv, 57  
 receives Kai Khusrau's reply, iv, 62  
 prepares to renew the fight, iv, 63  
 receives Rúín with a letter from Pírán, iv, 67  
 entertains Rúín, iv, 68  
 dismisses Rúín with presents and the reply to Pírán's letter, iv, 74  
 prepares for the flank-attack of Lahhák and Farshíward, iv, 82  
 sends Hajír with orders to Gív, iv, 82  
 harangues the host, iv, 89  
 resolves to fight in person, iv, 90, 92, 96  
 gives the left wing to Farhád, iv, 92  
 right wing to Katmára, iv, 92  
 rear to Shídúsh, iv, 92  
 chief command to Gustaham, iv, 92  
 instructs Gustaham, iv, 92  
 holds a parley with Pírán and arranges with him the Battle of the Eleven Rukhs, iv, 95 *seq.*  
 slays Pírán's steed, iv, 107  
 pursues Pírán, iv, 108  
 calls on Pírán to surrender, iv, 108  
 Pírán wounds, iv, 108
- Gúdarz, slays Pírán, iv, 109  
 drinks Pírán's blood, iv, 109  
 sends Ruhhám to fetch Pírán's corpse, iv, 110  
 harangues the host, iv, 110  
 resumes his command, iv, 111  
 calls for volunteers to pursue Lahhák and Farsh'dward, iv, 116  
 sends Gustaham, iv, 117  
 Bízhan to help Gustaham, iv, 119  
 comes before Kai Khusrau with the other champions, iv, 126  
 receives Ispahán, iv, 129  
 commands the left wing, iv, 147  
 takes part in the assault on Gang-bihisht, iv, 208  
 left in command at Gang-bihisht, iv, 219  
 Gív and, meet Húm, iv, 263  
 hear of Húm's adventure with Afrásiyáb, iv, 263  
 gives Kai Khusrau and Kai Káuś tidings of Afrásiyáb, iv, 264  
 Kai Khusrau remonstrated with by, and other nobles for refusing audience, iv, 275  
 takes counsel with other nobles, iv, 277  
 sends Gív to summon Zál and Rustam, iv, 278  
 goes with other chiefs to meet Zál and Rustam, iv, 282  
 audience of, with Kai Khusrau, iv, 283 *seq.*  
 holds, with other chiefs, at the bidding of Kai Khusrau, an assembly on the plain, iv, 291 *seq.*  
 Kai Khusrau's charge to, iv, 294  
 gift to, iv, 295  
 asks Kai Khusrau for a patent for Gív, iv, 298

- Gúdarz, goes with Kai Khusrau on his pilgrimage, iv, 306  
 turns back at the bidding of Kai Khusrau, iv, 307  
 laments the loss of the paladins, iv, 310, 312  
 returns to Írán, iv, 310  
 promises fealty to Lulhrásp, iv, 312  
 grandsons of, go with Zarír to Rúm, iv, 360  
 hail Gushtásp as Sháh, iv, 362
- Gúdarz, Ashkánian king, vi, 197, 210
- Gúdarzians, descendants of Gúdarz son of Kishwád, iii, 108, 115, 200, 214
- Gulár, place, vi, 206
- Gulgún (bright-bay), steed of Gúdarz, iii, 366  
 steed of Lulhrásp, v, 64  
 steed of Bahrám Gúr, vii, 57
- Gulshahr, wife of Pírán, ii, 260, 276, 288, 387, 390  
 prepares Jarífra's wedding outfit, ii, 270  
 presents gifts to Farangís, ii, 275  
 announces the birth of Kai Khusrau to Pírán, ii, 326  
 referred to, ii, 383
- Gulzaryún, river in Turkistán (Jaxartes), ii, 358, 381; iv, 187, 189, 190, 218, 219; vii, 329, 340, 360
- Gulnár, slave-girl of Ardawán, vi, 217  
 meaning of, vi, 217 *note*  
 intrigue of, with Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 217 *seq.*  
 reports the presage of the astrologers to Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 219  
 flees with Ardshír Pápakán to Párs, vi, 220
- Gumbadán, mount and stronghold, v, 29, 86, 152, 171, 177, 206; ix, 93  
 situation of, v, 30  
 Asfandiyár warder at, v, 84
- Gund-i-Shápúr (Shápúr Gird, Rás Shápúr, Kand-i-Shápúr, Jund-i-Shápúr), city in Khúzistán, north-west of Shúshtar and now represented by the ruins of Sháhábád, vi, 295; vii, 219, 276  
 built for Roman captives, vi, 295  
 Mání-gate of, vi, 327  
 Núshzád imprisoned at, vii, 264 and *note*
- Gúr (Júr, Zúr, Pírúzábád), city in Párs, south of Shíráz, vi, 199, 205, 229 *note*, 230, 245
- Gúr, nickname of Bahrám son of Yazdagird, vii, 6  
 Nöldeke on, vii, 6
- Gúrán, king of Kirmán, iv, 146
- Guráz (Shahrbaráz, Faráyín *q.v.*), general of Khusrau Parwíz and Sháh, 174, 175, viii, 194, 408, 409 *seq.*; ix, 44  
 conspires with Farrukhzád, viii, 408  
 invites Cæsar to take Írán, viii, 408  
 rebels, viii, 411; ix, 45  
 letters of, ix, 45, 46  
 letter of Pírúz to, ix, 47  
 account of, ix, 50  
 meaning of, ix, 50  
 dual personality of, ix, 50  
 marches on Taisafún, ix, 51  
 confers with Íránian magnates, ix, 51  
 misrule of, ix, 53  
 conspiracy against, ix, 54  
 goes hunting, ix, 55  
 end of, ix, 55
- Guráz, son of Máhwí, referred to, ix, 107, 115  
 governor of Marv, ix, 120  
 put to death with his sons, ix, 120



- Guráza, Íránian hero, 151, ii, 73, 340; iii, 20, 25, 34, 45, 48, 92, 129, 141, 253; iv, 15, 24, 34  
 takes king of Barbar prisoner, ii, 97  
 takes part in the Fight of the Seven Warriors, ii, 107 *seq.*  
 encampment of, described, ii, 155  
 goes with Rustam to rescue Bízhan, iii, 334  
 fights with Farshídwár, iv, 87  
 chosen to fight with Siyámak, iv, 97  
 slays Siyámak, iv, 100
- Gurazm (Kavárazem), a relative of Gushtásp, 155, v, 12, 22, 53, 99, 101, 102, 104 *seq.*, 171, 205, 261  
 envies Asfandiyár, v, 78  
 death of, referred to, v, 97  
 Asfandiyár addresses the corpse of, v, 105
- Gurdáfríd, daughter of Gazhdaham, 144, ii, 119, 138  
 referred to, ii, 131  
 encounter of, with Suhráb, ii, 132 *seq.*  
 beguiles Suhráb, ii, 133 *seq.*
- Gurdgir, son of Afrásiyáb, ii, 92  
 commands the troops from Tartary, Khallukh, and Balkh, iv, 156
- Gurdwí, brother of Bahrám Chúbína, 173, 174, viii, 74, 202, 205, 206, 231, 293, 295, 296, 298, 342, 349, 354, 358; ix, 6  
 a legitimist, viii, 74  
 Gustaham and, persuade Khusrau Parwíz not to make a night-attack, viii, 224  
 takes charge of baggage, viii, 228  
 Bahrám Chúbína writes to, viii, 285
- Gurdwí, fights with Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 294  
 receives province, viii, 313  
 informs Khusrau Parwíz of Gurdyá's doings, viii, 356  
 writes to, and sends Khusrau Parwíz' letter to, Gurdyá, viii, 360  
 wife of, goes with letters to Gurdyá, viii, 360  
 hears of the plight of Rai and informs Gurdyá, viii, 367
- Gurdyá, sister of Bahrám Chúbína, 171, 173, 174, ii, 119; viii, 74, 104 *note*, 187, 191, 347, *seq.*, 358, 365; ix, 6  
 a legitimist, viii, 74  
 present at council, viii, 164  
 speech of, viii, 165, 167, 171  
 referred to, viii, 221  
 counsels Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 221  
 laments Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 340  
 resident at Marv, viii, 346 *seq.*  
 informs her followers of the Khán's offer of marriage, viii, 349  
 starts for Írán, viii, 351  
 parleys with Tuwurg, viii, 352  
 arrives at Ámwí, viii, 354  
 doings of reported to Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 356, 358  
 met by Gustaham, viii, 356  
 asked in marriage by Gustaham, viii, 357  
 receives letters from Khusrau Parwíz and Gurdwí, viii, 360  
 plots murder of Gustaham, viii, 360  
 justifies murder of Gustaham, viii, 361  
 reports death of Gustaham to Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 361

Gurđya, dresses up as a warrior to please Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 363

prowess of, in drinking, viii, 364

appointed overseer of royal bower, viii, 364

diverts Khusrau Parwíz and saves Rai, viii, 368

Gurgán (Hyrcania), province watered by the Atrak and Gurgán rivers on the south-eastern shores of the Caspian, 168, iv, 61; vi, 373; vii, 89, 237, 337, 338, 357, 358, 361; viii, 15, 355; ix, 89

Abú'l Kásim of. *See* Abú'l Kásim.

Gurganj, one of the two capitals of Khárazm (Kát (Káth) being the other), situated on the Persian side of the Oxus, iv, 60

Gurgín, son of Mílád, Iránian hero, 150, 151, ii, 33, 35, 62, 70, 73, 85, 90, 127, 138, 144, 316, 319, 394; iii, 11, 12, 19, 20, 25, 48, 108, 115, 126, 145, 182, 211, 253, 264, 268, 273, 285, 289, 292, 294 *seq.*, 300, 305, 310 *seq.*, 322, 323, 331 *seq.*, 345, 346, 352; iv, 13, 15, 21, 24, 147, 191, 292; viii, 72, 211, 216 takes part in the Fight of the Seven Warriors, ii, 107 *seq.*

undertakes embassy to Afrásiyáb, iii, 29

goes with letter from Kai Khusrau to Rustam, iii, 274

accompanies Bízhan to Irmán, iii, 292

refuses to help Bízhan against the wild boars, iii, 293

envies and boggles Bízhan, iii, 294

Gurgín, goes with Bízhan in quest of Manízha, iii, 296 searches for Bízhan, iii, 310 finds Bízhan's steed, iii, 311 questioned by Gív about Bízhan, iii, 312

false account of, about Bízhan's disappearance, iii, 313

Gív's wrath with, iii, 314 appears before Kai Khusrau, iii, 316

imprisoned, iii, 317

appeals to Rustam, iii, 331

released, iii, 333

goes with Rustam to rescue Bízhan, iii, 334

pardoned by Bízhan, iii, 346 opposes Lahhák, iv, 83

chosen to fight Andarímán, iv, 97

slays Andarímán, iv, 104

Kai Khusrau remonstrated with by, and other nobles for refusing audience, iv, 283 *seq.*

audience of, with Kai Khusrau, iv, 283 *seq.*

Gurgsár, tribe, v, 43 and *note*

Gurgsár, Túránian hero, 156, v, 117, 131 *seq.*, 146, 233 *note*

made captain of the host by Arjásp, v, 46

given command of one wing, v, 56

persuades Arjásp to remain and fight Asfandiyár, v, 108, 109

made leader of the host, v, 109

taken prisoner by Asfandiyár, v, 111

offers to guide Asfandiyár to the Brazen Hold, v, 113

goes as guide with Asfandiyár to Túrán, v, 120

offered the kingdom of the Turkmans by Asfandiyár in return for faithful service, v, 129

Gurgsár, describes the route to the Brazen Hold, and the Seven Stages, v, 120 *seq.*, 124 *seq.*, 128, 132, 134  
 chagrun of, at Asfandiyár's successes, v, 124, 128, 131, 133  
 reproached by Asfandiyár for giving false information, v, 139, 140  
 offered the captainship of the Brazen Hold by Asfandiyár in return for trusty guidance, v, 140  
 shows the Iránians a ford, v, 140  
 questioned by Asfandiyár for the last time, v, 141  
 curses Asfandiyár, v, 141  
 slain by Asfandiyár, v, 141  
 Gúrkán (Júzján), city and district between Marvrúd and Balkh, iv, 65  
 Gurkís, tribe (?), viii, 15  
 Gurúkhán, Iránian hero, iv, 149  
 Gurwí, Túránian hero, 145, 151, 152, ii, 296, 314, 319, 338, 340; iii, 197, 199, 237; iv, 7, 99, 111, 252; v, 272  
 challenges and is overthrown by Siyáwush, ii, 295  
 advocates the execution of Siyáwush, ii, 317  
 carries out the execution of Siyáwush, ii, 320  
 chosen to fight with Gív, iv, 97  
 taken prisoner by Gív, iv, 100  
 brought by Gív before Kai Khusrau, iv, 127  
 executed, iv, 129  
 Gurzbán, vi, 394. *See* Gurkán.  
 Gushasp, sacred Fire, vi, 201  
 Gushasp, chief scribe, *temp.* Bahrám Gúr, vii, 11  
 bidden to remit the arrears of taxes, vii, 11

Gushasp, nonce-name assumed by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 59 *seq.*  
 Gushasp, nonce-name assumed by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 59 *seq.*  
 Gúsh-bistár, a savage, vi, 80, 177  
 meaning of, vi, 177 *note*  
 interview of, with Sikandar, vi, 177  
 Gushtásp (Vistáspa, Vishtásp, Hystaspes<sup>1</sup>), son of Luhrásp, father of Asfandiyár, and Sháh, 154-157, i, 42, 61; ii, 3, 9; iii, 109; iv, 314 *seq.*, 334 *seq.*, v, 24 *seq.*, 61, 68, 90, 92 *seq.*, 103 *seq.*, 119, 130, 148, 154, 155, 159, 166 *seq.*, 180, 181, 183, 205, 206, 208 *seq.*, 213, 216, 220, 221, 233 *note*, 243, 248 *seq.*, 281, 289, 293; vi, 20, 49, 55, 200, 213, 251, 252, 258; vii, 359; viii, 41, 68, 95, 148, 213, 270, 392, 393; ix, 25  
 son of Luhrásp, iv, 318  
 jealousy of, respecting the grandsons of Kai Káuś, iv, 318  
 asks Luhrásp to appoint him heir to the crown, iv, 318  
 departs in wrath for Hind, iv, 319  
 arrives at Kábul, iv, 320  
 overtaken by Zarír, iv, 320  
 takes counsel with the chiefs, iv, 321  
 returns to Luhrásp, iv, 322  
 pardoned by Luhrásp, iv, 322  
 determines to quit Irán, iv, 323  
 takes a steed of Luhrásp's, iv, 323  
 story of, in Rúm, ii, 10; iii, 285; iv, 324 *seq.*  
 interview of with Híshwí, iv, 324

<sup>1</sup> The Hystaspes of legend not necessarily the father of Darius I, *See* Vol. iv, p 314 *seq.*

Gushtásp, vainly seeks work in  
 Rúm as a scribe, iv, 325  
 herdsman, iv, 326  
 camel-driver, iv, 326  
 blacksmith, iv, 327  
 dreamed of by Katáyún, iv,  
 329  
 goes to Cæsar's palace, iv,  
 330  
 chosen for her husband by  
 Katáyún, iv, 330  
 marries Katáyún, iv, 331  
 spends his time in the chase,  
 iv, 332  
 makes friends with Hîshwî,  
 iv, 332 and *note*  
 asked by Hîshwî to under-  
 take the adventure of the  
 wolf of Fâskûn, iv, 335  
 undertakes to slay the wolf  
 of Fâskûn, iv, 336  
 provided with steed and  
 arms by Mîrín, iv, 336  
 goes with Mîrín and Hîshwî  
 to the forest of Fâskûn,  
 iv, 337  
 prays for help, iv, 337  
 gives thanks for his victory,  
 iv, 338  
 takes the wolf's tusks, iv,  
 338  
 welcomed by Hîshwî and  
 Mîrín on his return, iv,  
 339  
 discovers to Katáyún his  
 royal race, iv, 340  
 referred to, iv, 343 *seq.*  
 asked by Hîshwî to under-  
 take the adventure of the  
 dragon of Mount Sakîla,  
 iv, 345  
 bids Ahran provide a steed,  
 sword, and other arms,  
 iv, 345  
 goes with Ahran and Hîsh-  
 wî to Mount Sakîla, iv,  
 346  
 takes two of the dragon's  
 teeth, iv, 346  
 gives thanks for his victory,  
 iv, 347

Gushtásp, welcomed by Hîshwî  
 and Ahran on his return,  
 iv, 347  
 accepts gifts from Ahran  
 and bestows part upon  
 Hîshwî, iv, 347  
 returns to Katáyún, iv, 348  
 goes to the sports on  
 Cæsar's riding-ground, iv,  
 349  
 prowess of, at polo and  
 archery, iv, 350  
 questioned by Cæsar, iv, 350  
 reproaches Cæsar for his  
 treatment of Katáyún, iv,  
 350  
 claim of, to have slain the  
 wolf and the dragon, iv,  
 351  
 confirmed by Hîshwî, iv,  
 351  
 reconciled to Cæsar, iv, 351  
 goes to court and is received  
 with honour by Cæsar,  
 iv, 351  
 consulted about Ilyás by  
 Cæsar, iv, 353  
 leads forth the host, iv, 354  
 refuses the overtures of  
 Ilyás, iv, 354  
 brings the body of Ilyás to  
 Cæsar, iv, 356  
 routs the host of Ilyás, iv,  
 356  
 returns in triumph to Cæsar,  
 iv, 356  
 recognised by Zarír, iv, 360  
 goes to Zarír's camp, iv, 361  
 hears of Luhrásp's abdi-  
 cation in his favour, iv,  
 362  
 saluted as Sháh by the  
 chiefs, iv, 362  
 invites Cæsar to a feast, iv,  
 362  
 sets out for Írán with Katá-  
 yún, iv, 364  
 parts in good will from  
 Cæsar, iv, 364  
 welcomed and crowned by  
 Luhrásp, iv, 364

Gushtásp, Reign of, 154, v, 9 *seq.*

Notes on, v, 9 *seq.*, 116 *seq.*,  
166 *seq.*, 260 *seq.*

division of, v, 9

points of interest in, v, 9

compared with that of  
Darius Hystaspis, v, 10

diagram to illustrate, v, 27

legend of Zarduhsht and, v,  
18

black horse of, v, 18, 28

sees his place in Paradise, v,  
19

Ridge of, v, 29

succeeds Luhrásp as Sháh,  
v, 31

sons of, v, 32

pays yearly tribute to Ar-  
jásp, v, 32

converted by Zarduhsht, v,  
33

helps to spread the Faith,  
v, 34

establishes Mihr Barzín and  
other Fire-fanes, v, 34

conversion of, recorded on  
Cypress of Kishmar, v, 34

advised by Zarduhsht not  
to pay tribute to Arjásp,  
v, 35

receives embassy from  
Arjásp and takes counsel  
with his chiefs, v, 41

sends answer to Arjásp, v, 43

summons the host, v, 47

marches against Arjásp, v,  
48

bids Jámásp foretell the  
issue of the fight, v, 48

distress of, at Jámásp's  
prophecy, v, 53

encouraged to fight by  
Jámásp, v, 54

gives Zarír the standard and  
the command of the cen-  
tre, v, 55

one wing to Asfandiyár,  
v, 55

other wing to Shídas, v,  
55

the rear to Nastúr, v, 55

Gushtásp, takes up his position  
on a height, v, 55, 56, 63

referred to, v, 60, 64 *seq.*,  
89

hears of the death of Zarír,  
v, 64

wishes to avenge Zarír, v,  
64, 68

dissuaded by Jámásp, v, 64,  
69

offers his daughter Humái  
to the avenger of Zarír,  
v, 64

crown and throne to the  
avenger of Zarír, v, 66

gives his steed and arms to  
Nastúr, v, 69

sees and laments over Zarír's  
corpse, v, 73

bids Nastúr lead the host  
home, v, 74

marries Humái to Asfandi-  
yár, v, 74

gives Nastúr a command  
and bids him invade

Túrán, v, 74

rewards the host, v, 75

builds a Fire-fane and makes  
Jámásp its archmage, v,  
75

Mansion of, v, 75

writes to his governors to  
announce the defeat of

Arjásp, v, 75

receives embassies and tri-  
bute from Caesar and from

the kings of Barbaristán,  
Hind, and Sind, v, 75

makes Asfandiyár chief  
ruler of Írán and sends

him to convert the world,  
v, 76

sends the Zandavasta to  
each clime, v, 77

Gurazm slanders Asfandiyár  
to, v, 78

sends Jámásp to recall As-  
fandiyár to court, v, 80

convokes an assembly and  
arraigns Asfandiyár, v,  
82 *seq.*

- Gushtâsp, puts Asfandiyâr in bonds, v, 84  
 sends Asfandiyâr to Gumbadân, v, 84  
 takes the Zandavasta to Sîstân, v, 85  
 welcomed by Rustam and Zâl, v, 85  
 kings revolt from, v, 85  
 while in Sîstân hears from his wife of the sack of Balkh and the captivity of his daughters, v, 93  
 calls together his chiefs and summons the host, v, 94  
 marches from Sîstân toward Balkh, v, 94  
 takes command of the centre, v, 94  
 thirty-eight sons of, slain, and defeat of, in fight with Arjâsp, v, 95, 96  
 takes refuge on a mountain, v, 96, 100  
 consults Jâmâsp, v, 96  
 sends Jâmâsp to Asfandiyâr with the offer of the crown in return for help, v, 97  
 interview of, with, and promise to resign the crown to, Asfandiyâr, v, 106  
 commands the centre, v, 109  
 makes thanksgiving for victory, v, 113  
 promises to resign the crown to Asfandiyâr when he has delivered his sisters from captivity, v, 114  
 summons troops, rewards Asfandiyâr, and sends him to invade Tûrân, v, 115  
 hears of Asfandiyâr's success and writes to him, v, 160  
 gives a banquet on Asfandiyâr's return, v, 164  
 consults Jâmâsp and the astrologers on Asfandiyâr's future, v, 168
- Gushtâsp, Asfandiyâr recounts his deeds to, v, 170 *seq.*  
 promises to resign the throne to Asfandiyâr when he has brought Rustam and his kin in bonds to court, v, 173, 174  
 Asfandiyâr sends the corpses of Nûsh Âzar and Mihr-i-Nûsh, and a message to, v, 232  
 Asfandiyâr's last message to, v, 249  
 hears of Asfandiyâr's death and laments for him, v, 252  
 wrath of the nobles with, v, 252  
 reproached by Bishûtan, v, 253  
 Humâi and Bih Âfrîd, v, 254  
 Rustam's overtures to, v, 256  
 Bishûtan testifies in Rustam's favour to, v, 257  
 reconciled, and writes, to Rustam, v, 257  
 advised by Jâmâsp to write to Bahman, v, 258  
 writes to Rustam and Bahman to recall the latter, v, 258  
 welcomes and gives Bahman the name Ardshîr, v, 259  
 tells Jâmâsp of his wishes as to the succession, v, 279  
 dies, v, 280
- Gustaham, son of Naudar and brother of Tûs, i, 90; ii, 127, 336; iv, 194  
 Tûs and, sent by Naudar to conduct the Persian women to Alburz, i, 351, 353  
 hear of Naudar's death, i, 364  
 passed over in the succession, i, 369, 370  
 Kai Khusrau sends troops to succour, iv, 157

Gustaham, son of Naudar, attacks the Túránians, iv, 178  
 sent to Chách with troops, iv, 188  
 reports his defeat of Khurákhán, iv, 193  
 takes part in the assault on Gang-bihisht, iv, 208  
 left in command of Gang-bihisht, iv, 238  
 goes to welcome Kai Khusrau on his return from Gang-dizh, iv, 252  
 left behind as viceroy on Kai Khusrau's return to Írán, iv, 254  
 Gustaham, son of Gazhdaham,<sup>1</sup>  
 Íránian hero, 152, i, 369 ;  
 ii, 12, 58, 107 ; iii, 19, 25,  
 33, 45, 48, 59, 92, 93, 127,  
 129, 139, 141, 211, 247,  
 248, 253, 273, 289, 294,  
 322, 350 ; iv, 7, 13, 15,  
 24, 33, 93, 132 *seq.*, 149,  
 191, 292  
 takes part in the Fight of  
 the Seven Warriors, ii,  
 107 *seq.*  
 friendship of, for Bízhan,  
 iii, 15  
 lends Bízhan a steed, iii, 60  
 mounts behind Bízhan, iii,  
 95  
 attacks Bídád, iii, 244  
 sends Bízhan to summon  
 Rustam, iii, 245  
 goes with Rustam to rescue  
 Bízhan, iii, 334  
 fights with Andarímán, iv,  
 87  
 made commander in chief  
*pro tem. vice* Gúdarz, iv,  
 92  
 Gúdarz instructs, iv, 92  
 resigns his command to  
 Gúdarz, iv, 111  
 volunteers to pursue Lahhák  
 and Farshíward, iv, 116  
 wounded, iv, 123

Gustaham, son of Gazhdaham,  
 rescued by Bízhan, iv,  
 124 *seq.*  
 healed by Kai Khusrau, iv,  
 133  
 Kai Khusrau remonstrated  
 with by, and other nobles  
 for refusing audience, iv,  
 275  
 audience of, with Kai Khus-  
 rau, iv, 283 *seq.*  
 Kai Khusrau's gifts to, iv,  
 295  
 sets out with Kai Khusrau  
 on his pilgrimage, iv, 306  
 refuses to turn back when  
 bidden by Kai Khusrau,  
 iv, 307  
 Kai Khusrau farewells and  
 warns, and his comrades,  
 iv, 308  
 disappears and is sought  
 in vain by, and his  
 comrades, iv, 308  
 end of, iv, 309  
 Gustaham, Íránian warrior, *temp.*  
 Yazdagird son of Shápúr,  
 vi, 394  
 lions of, slain by Bahrám  
 Gúr, vi, 410  
 Bahrám Gúr's commander-  
 in-chief, vii, 85  
 Gustaham (Bistám *q.v.*),  
 maternal uncle of Khus-  
 rau Parwíz, 171-174, viii,  
 199, 200, 202, 204 *seq.*,  
 227, 228, 231, 255, 257,  
 259, 269, 282, 289, 293,  
 295, 298 ; ix, 4, 6  
 imprisonment of, viii, 77, 176  
 Bandwí and, escape and  
 revolt, viii, 182  
 informs Khusrau Parwíz of  
 the blinding of Hurmuzd,  
 viii, 184  
 referred to, viii, 189  
 revolt of, viii, 191, 355  
 saves Khusrau Parwíz from  
 Turk, viii, 220

<sup>1</sup>This is assumed in all cases where it is doubtful which Gustaham is meant.  
*Cf.* Vol. i, p. 369.

Gustaham (Bistám), Gurdwí and, dissuade Khusrau Parwíz from making a night-attack, viii, 224  
 treasurer, viii, 229 and *note* accompanies Khusrau Parwíz in his flight, viii, 231  
 turns back and murders Hurmuzd, viii, 232  
 rejoins Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 233  
 Khusrau Parwíz warned against, viii, 255, 256  
 deceived by Caesar's talisman, viii, 272  
 praised by Caesar, viii, 279  
 Bahráh Chúbína writes to, viii, 285  
 chooses comrades for Khusrau Parwíz in battle, viii, 296  
 receives Khurásán viii, 313  
 summoned to court, viii, 355  
 hears of execution of Bándwí, viii, 355  
 hears of Gurdyá's doings, viii, 356  
 goes to meet Gurdyá, viii, 356  
 asks Gurdyá in marriage, viii, 357  
 Gurdyá plots murder of, viii, 360  
 intimates of, beheaded, viii, 370  
 assassination of, referred to, ix, 16, 104  
 Gutschmid, Alfred von, on the Cyrus legend in Ctesias, vi, 195  
 Gúzihr, Tribal King, vi, 198, 199

## H

HABASH (Ethiopia), 160, vi, 149  
 people of, encountered by Sikandar, vi, 149  
 Haftánbúkht. *See* Haftwád.  
 Haft Khán, ii, 29

Haft Khwán, ii, 29; v, 117 and *note*  
 of Rustam and Asfandiyár compared, v, 117  
 Mán, ii, 29  
 Haftwád (Haftánbúkht, Astawadh), Tribal King, 161, vi, 199  
 account of, in Tabarí, vi, 205  
 daughter of, vi, 205, 206, 233, 234  
 becomes guardian of the Worm, vi, 236  
 Nóldeke and Darinesteter on, vi, 206  
 son of, vi, 206  
 helps his father against Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 236  
 Story of, 161, vi, 232 *seq.*  
 seven sons of, vi, 233, 235  
 rise to power of, vi, 235  
 builds, and migrates to, a stronghold, vi, 235  
 Ardshír Pápakán and, vi, 236 *seq.*  
 slain by Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 245  
 Haitál, Haitálians, country and people (White Huns), dwelling north of the Oxus, 166, 168, vii, 6, 153, 161, 164, 171, 174, 181, 187, 197, 340, 342, 390; viii, 45, 242, 329, 370, 377  
 origin and seat of, i, 19, 20  
 confused with the Turks, vii, 4  
 Bahráh Gúr's defeat of, vii, 4  
 help Pírúz, vii, 156, 157  
 Pírúz's expedition against, vii, 159, 164 *seq.*  
 tradition of, vii, 160  
 king of, vii, 160, 184  
 helps Kubád, vii, 198  
 Kubád's flight to, vii, 170, 184, 198



- Haitál Haitálans, Núshírwán's alliance with the Khán against, vii, 317  
 Khán's war with, vii, 328 *seq.*  
 Khán's embassy to Núshírwán destroyed by, vii, 330  
 host of, levied to oppose the Khán, vii, 331  
 defeated, vii, 332  
 Núshírwán's help sought by, vii, 332  
 Faghánish made king by, vii, 333  
 Núshírwán takes counsel concerning, vii, 333 334,  
 make submission to Núshírwán, vii, 360
- Ha'iy, son of Kutíba, governor of Tús and a patron of Firdausí, i, 35, 39
- Hajír, Íránian hero, 144, 151, ii, 134, 136, 140, 349; iv, 103, 147, 191  
 taken prisoner by Suhráb, ii, 131  
 misleads Suhráb, ii, 152 *seq.*  
 life of, attempted by Rustam, ii, 176  
 attacks Bídád, iii, 244  
 put in charge of the baggage, iv, 24  
 bears letters from Gúdarz to Kai Khusrau, iv, 57  
 rewarded by Kai Khusrau, iv, 58  
 bears Kai Khusrau's reply to Gúdarz, iv, 61, 62  
 goes with orders to Gív, iv, 82, 83  
 slays Andarímán's horse, iv, 87  
 chosen to fight with Sipahram, iv, 97  
 slays Sipahram, iv, 104
- Halab (Chalybon - Beroea, Aleppo), city in northern Syria, iv, 359, 360; viii, 41, 46, 47
- Halai (Olympia (?), Náhid), daughter, in legend, of Philip II of Macedon, vi, 19
- Halai, reason for her repudiation by Dáráb and her naming her son Iskandar (Sikandar), vi, 19
- Halai-Sandarús. *See* Halai.
- Hamadán (Ekbatana), city in 'Irak-i-'Ajamí, vi, 31; vii, 6; viii, 178, 189; ix, 68
- Hámávarán (Yaman), south-western Arabia, 143, ii, 25, 78 *seq.*, 94, 96 *seq.*, 139, 143 *seq.*, 213, 215, 218, 250; iv, 296, 299; v, 174, 207, 208, 220; viii, 104, 168  
 king of, 143, i, 338; ii, 85 *seq.*, 93, 207 and *note*; v, 176  
 asks quarter of Rustam, ii, 97  
 releases Kai Káuś, ii, 97
- Hamáwan, mountain, 148, iii, 135, 137, 138, 142, 144, 153, 154, 158, 161, 164, 167, 169, 172, 177; iv, 299; v, 116  
 occupied by the Íránians, iii, 132
- Hamdán Gashasp, Íránian chief, viii, 122, 163, 204  
 speech of, viii, 166
- Hamza, of Ispahán, tenth century Arabic historian, vi, 257
- Handgrip, as test of strength, ii, 64, 66, 67; v, 208
- IIáni bin Mas'úd, Arab chief, viii, 190
- Haoma. *See* Homa.  
 = Húm, *q.v.*
- Haraiti Bareza (Alburz, *q.v.*), mountain, iv, 137
- Harám, the environs of Mecca, vi, 65, 120 and *note*, 121
- Haram, of Khusrau Parwíz, ix, 4, 5
- Harát, city in north-western Afghánistán, ii, 101; iii, 222; viii, 71, 92, 110, 116, 117, 130, 173

- Harát, early seat of Aryan civiliza-  
tion, i, 7  
battle of, i, 21  
Firdausí flees to, from Mah-  
múd, i, 39  
desert of, ii, 228; viii, 114  
marchlord of. *See* Mákh.  
bestowed by Máhwí on his  
son, ix, 115
- Háris, father of Kais, viii, 250
- Háarith, father of Nadr, *q.v.*, v,  
166
- Háarith bin Jabala, prince of the  
Ghassánians, vii, 217  
protected by Justinian, vii,  
217  
war of, with Munzir, vii, 217
- Harpagus, Persian noble, *temp.*  
Astyages, ii, 190  
= Pirán in legend, ii, 191
- Hárúim (City of Women), 160, vi,  
73, 153 *seq.*  
visited by Sikandar, vi, 153  
*seq.*  
Sikandar's correspondence  
with the ruler of, vi, 153  
*seq.*
- Hárunu'r-Rashíd, Khalífa (A.D.  
786-809), i, 14
- Hárút, angel, iii, 286, 288  
'Harvest of Bahrám,' viii, 292
- Hasan Sabbáh (The Old Man of  
the Mountain), v, 30
- Háshim, Arab general, ix, 68  
sent by 'Umar in pursuit of  
Yazdagird, ix, 68  
wins battle of Jalúlá, ix, 68  
takes Hulwán, ix, 68
- Háshimí, a descendant of Háshim  
the great grandfather of  
Muhammad, i, 25; vi, 362  
and *note*
- Háshimite = Muhammad, ix, 81  
and *note*
- Háshish, murderer of Darius  
Codomanus, vi, 32
- Hatra (Al Hadr), city, vi, 321  
*seq.*  
account of, vi, 322  
besieged, vi, 322  
fall of, legend of, vi, 322
- Hatra, king of, vi, 323
- Haug, his theory of the origin of  
Zoroastrianism, ii, 8
- Hauz, tank or pool, i, 203 and  
*note*, vii, 50 and *note*
- Hawk, hawks, domestication of,  
by Tahmúras, i, 126  
two white, Kai Kubád's  
dream of, i, 385
- Hawking. *See* Falconry.
- Hay, sack of, Bahrám Chúbína  
and the, viii, 109
- Hazár, Hazáran, Túránian hero,  
v, 24, 50, 59
- Hazára, father of Kút, viii, 291
- Hecataeus, Greek historian (6th-  
5th centuries B.C.), vi, 13
- Helenopolis, city in Bithynia, vi,  
61
- Heraclius, Eastern Roman Em-  
peror (A.D. 610-642), v,  
306 *note*; viii, 187, 191;  
ix, 5, 7  
attempts of, for peace with  
Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 194,  
195  
takes Dastagird, viii, 194  
retreat of, viii, 195, 196  
Shirwí's letter to, ix, 7  
alliance of, with Shahrbaráz,  
ix, 43, 44
- Hermit, Khusrau Parwíz and the  
172, viii, 254
- Herodotus, Greek historian (B.C.  
484-425), ii, 9; iii, 191;  
vi, 13, 16, 68, 72, 73; viii,  
193  
legend of Cyrus the Great in,  
ii, 190; vi, 195
- Heroes, chief, of mixed descent,  
i, 55  
Vale of, vii, 6
- Hesperides, Garden of the, vi,  
74
- Hierapolis. *See* Árayish-i-Rúm.
- High priest, *temp.* Shápúr son of  
Urmuzd, vi, 343 *seq.*  
hears of Shápúr's return, vi,  
344  
informs the captain of the  
host, vi, 345

- Hijáz, north-western Arabia,  
viii, 24 and *note*, 66, 67
- Hilál, Arab, ix, 69
- slayer of Rustam son of  
Farukh-Hurnuzd, ix, 70
- Himálaya (Himavat), mountain-  
range dividing India from  
Thibet, vi, 74, 81
- Himavat. *See above*.
- Himyar—Hámávarán (Yaman),  
ii, 79
- Hind, Hindústán, 147, 159, 161,  
165, 169, i, 231, 261; ii,  
92, 228, 287, 289; iii, 30,  
152, 164, 165, 177, 204,  
221, 222, 235, 237, 238,  
242; iv, 14, 60, 65, 133,  
196, 208, 272, 317, 320;  
v, 76, 188, 257, 262, 265,  
277; vi, 80, 81, 91, 98  
and *passim*  
land of sorcerers, i, 163  
Mai of, i, 252  
king of (Shangul) *temp.* Kai  
Khusrau, iii, 162, 210,  
218, 251  
*temp.* Bahráam Gúr, vii,  
113, 119, 126, 128  
*temp.* Núshírwán, viii, 52  
lord of=Shangul, iii, 187  
man of=Shangul, iii, 216  
prince of, iv, 71  
lord of=Mahmúd, iv, 142  
monarch of, iv, 319, 321  
kings of, send tribute to  
Gushtásp, iv, 75  
ambassadors from, come  
to Daráb, vi, 21  
Dará, vi, 35  
ruler of=Fúr, vi, 51  
Sikandar invades, vi, 98  
silk of, vi, 99  
king of=Kaid, vi, 103  
Sikandar becomes king of,  
vi, 118  
people of, help the Sindians  
against Sikandar, vi, 175  
Rája of, 169. *See* Rájá.  
Bahráam Gúr's visit to, vii,  
5, 110 *seq.*  
motive of, vii, 5
- Hind, Bahráam Gúr's visit to,  
fabulous, vii, 6  
king of, entertained by  
Bahráam Gúr, vii, 140  
*seq.*  
Núshírwán goes to, vii, 241
- Hindíyá (Amida?), city in  
Roman Armenia, vii, 200  
taken by Kubád, vii, 200
- Hindu Kush, mountain-range in  
Afghánistán, ii, 80
- Hindústání, vii, 6  
Gipsy language a debased  
form of, vii, 6
- Hiong-Nu, probably the Huns, v,  
13
- Híra, city west of the Euphrates  
near Mashad 'Alí (Nedjes),  
vi, 372; vii, 217; viii,  
188, 191; ix, 5, 66  
seat of the dynasty of Al  
Munzir, i, 55  
kingdom of, ix, 65  
abolished by Khusrau  
Parwíz, ix, 66  
attacked by Persians, ix, 67
- Hirá (Jebel Núr), mountain  
north of Mecca, viii, 42
- Hírbad, keeper of the women's  
house of Kai Káu's, ii, 202,  
206
- Hírmund (Helmund), river in  
Sistán in eastern Írán, i,  
358, 359; iii, 321; v, 178,  
182, 186, 191, 196, 219,  
285  
referred to, v, 198, 231
- Hishám ibn Muhammad ibn  
Al-Kalbí, Arabic historian  
(8th-9th centuries A.D.),  
vi, 30; viii, 73
- Híshwí, Rúman toll-collector,  
iv, 334 *seq.*  
interview of, with Gushtásp,  
iv, 324  
becomes friends with Gush-  
tásp, iv, 332  
asks Gushtásp, on behalf of  
Mírin, to undertake the  
adventure of the wolf of  
Fáskún, iv, 335

- Hishwí, goes with Gushtásp and Mirín to the forest of Fâskún, iv, 337
- Mirín and, welcome Gushtásp on his return, iv, 339
- asks Gushtásp, on behalf of Ahran, to undertake the adventure of the dragon of Mount Sakila, iv, 344
- goes with Gushtásp and Ahran to Mount Sakila, iv, 346
- Ahram and, welcome Gushtásp on his return, iv, 347
- receives gifts from Gushtásp, iv, 348
- confirms Gushtásp's claim to have slain the wolf and dragon, and produces their teeth to Cæsar, iv, 351
- Hittite, Hittites, vi, 71
- empire, vi, 71
- Hsuen Tsiang, Chinese traveller (A.D. 603-668), vi, 63
- quoted, vi, 63, 73
- Hoibaras, Persian slave, *temp.*
- Astyages, vi, 195
- Hold, The Brazen. *See* Brazen Hold.
- Holy Ghost, the, vi, 138 and *note*
- Holy Questions, Mountain of the, i, 62
- Homa (Soma), a plant held sacred by the Zoroastrians, i, 8 and *note*, ii, 8
- juice of, ii, 8
- referred to, iv, 138
- Homer, vi, 13, 72
- epic method of, contrasted with Firdausi's, i, 47
- quoted, vi, 68, 73
- Hormisdas I. *See* Urmuzd son of Shápúr.
- Hormisdas II. *See* Urmuzd son of Narsí.
- Hormisdas (Urmuzd son of Urmuzd son of Narsí), Persian prince, takes refuge with the Romans, vi, 318, 325
- Hormisdas, goes with Julhan to the East, vi, 325
- Horoscope, i, 152
- of the sons of Farídún, i, 188
- Zál, i, 251, 278
- Rustam, i, 278, 307
- Siyáwush, ii, 196, 205, 234
- Mirín, iv, 334
- Shaghád, v, 264
- Ardawán, vi, 218
- Bahrám Gúr, vi, 376
- Yazdagird son of Shápúr, vi, 390
- Shírwí, vi i, 372; ix, 16, 17
- Horse, of Persian royalty, how distinguished, ii, 410 *note*
- Gushtásp's black. *See* Black horse.
- (steed, knight), piece in chess, vii, 285, 423
- position of, vii, 388, 422
- move of, vii, 422
- Hourí, maid of Paradise, i, 272; ix, 81
- House of Darkness, ix, 7
- Crystal, ix, 25 and *note*
- Houses, the Twelve, of the sky, i, 103, 188
- good influence of, i, 52
- Hrazdán, river in Armenia, v, 13
- Hulwán (Arash), town, vii, 187, 201
- situation of, vii, 187
- Yazdagird retires to, ix, 67
- taken by Háshim, ix, 68
- Húm (Haoma, *q.v.*), hermit, 153, iv, 135 *seq.*, 259 *seq.*
- hears Afrásiyáb lamenting in the cave, iv, 260
- capture of Afrásiyáb by, iv, 261
- Darmesteter on, iv, 136
- pities and unbinds Afrásiyáb, iv, 262
- tells his adventure with Afrásiyáb to Gúdarz and Gfv, iv, 363
- Kai Káuś and Kai Khusrau, iv, 264
- suggests how Afrásiyáb may be recaptured, iv, 265

- Húm, recaptures Afrásiyáb, iv, 266  
 Huma. See below.  
 Humái (Huma), daughter, of Gushtásp, ii, 3; v, 12, 25  
   marriage of, with Asfandiyár, v, 22, 74  
   ignored by Firdausí, v, 22  
   offered in marriage to the avenger of Zarír, v, 64  
   taken captive by the Turks, v, 93, 100  
   goes with Bih Áfríd to draw water and meets Asfandiyár, v, 147  
   escapes from Arjásp's palace, v, 153  
   bewails Asfandiyár, v, 252  
   reproaches Gushtásp, v, 254  
 Humái (Chihrzád, *q.v.*), daughter and wife of Bahman, and mother of Dáráb, Sháh, 157, 158, ii, 3, 9, 10; v, 281, 290 *seq.*; vi, 20, 22, 199  
   married to Bahman, v, 290  
   Bahman appoints, and her issue, to succeed him, v, 291  
   Semiramis (?), v, 293  
   genealogies of, v, 293  
   Reign of, 158, v, 292 *seq.*  
     Note on, v, 292 *seq.*  
   accession of, v, 294  
   Dáráb born of, v, 294  
   referred to, v, 296  
   hears of Rúman invasion and bids Rashnawád lead forth the host, v, 301  
   reviews the host, v, 302  
   affected on seeing Dáráb, v, 302  
   hears from Rashnawád about Dáráb, v, 308  
   recognises that Dáráb is her son, v, 308  
   thanksgiving largess of, v, 309  
   Rashnawád and Dáráb appear before, v, 309 *seq.*
- Humái, crowns, and excuses herself to, Dáráb, v, 310  
   proclaims Dáráb, v, 311  
 Humái, Iránian chief, *temp.* Bahrám Gúr, vii, 88  
   goes as envoy to the Khán, vii, 87  
 Húmán, son of Wísa and brother of Pírán, Túránian hero, 144, 148, 149, 151, i, 92; ii, 129, 130, 132, 148, 150, 264, 390; iii, 90, 91, 93, 108, 120 *seq.*, 133 *seq.*, 142, 149, 152, 153, 158, 166, 169, 177, 182, 192, 202, 205, 210, 217, 227, 232, 234, 252, 250, 350; iv, 7, 8, 10, 29 *seq.*, 44, 55, 56, 61, 75, 76, 91, 118, 152  
   Bármán and, join Suhráb with troops, ii, 129  
   Afrásiyáb's instructions to, ii, 129  
   misleads Suhráb as to Rustam, ii, 165, 169  
   reproaches Suhráb for sparing Rustam, ii, 171  
   throws the blame for Suhráb's death on Hajír, ii, 176  
   withdraws from Írán under safe conduct, ii, 176, 181, 182, 184  
   rescues Afrásiyáb from Rustam, ii, 354, 355  
   persuades Afrásiyáb to abandon the pursuit of Kai Khusrau, ii, 394  
   parleys with Tús, iii, 121  
   leads the host against Tús, iii, 127  
   counsels Pírán, iii, 134  
   pursues the Iránians to Mount Hamáwan, iii, 135  
   rallies the Túránians, iii, 139  
   reconnoitres the Iránians, iii, 174  
   informs Pírán of the arrival of Rustam, iii, 174

- Húmán, parleys disguised with Rustam, iii, 196  
     commands the centre, iv, 25  
     dissuaded from fighting by Ífrán, iv, 30  
     parleys with Bízhan, iv, 45  
     armour of, donned by Bízhan, iv, 51  
     Túránians' grief at death of, iv, 51  
 Huns, the, i, 10; v, 13; vi, 15; vii, 153  
     settlement of, at Samarkand, i, 19  
     White. *See* Haitál.  
 Húr, father of Bihruz, vii, 72  
 Hurmuz (Urmuzd), Ashkánian king, vi, 197  
 Hurmuz (Ormus), city and island on the south-eastern shore of the Persian Gulf, vi, 204  
 Hurmuz (Hormisdas III), Sháh, 166, vii, 153, 186  
     appointed by Yazdagird to succeed him, vii, 155  
     Reign of, vii, 156  
     Note on, vii, 156  
     defeated by Píruz, vii, 157  
     pardoned by Píruz, vii, 156, 158  
     leads the van in the war with the Turkmans (Haitálíans), vii, 164  
     perishes in battle, vii, 168  
 Hurmuz, minister of Bahrám Gúr, vii, 26  
 Hurmuzd (Hormisdas IV), son of Núshírwán, Sháh, 169-172, vii, 279; viii, 56 *seq.*, 69 *seq.*, 74 *seq.*, 78, 87, 147, 169, 170, 174, 198, 209, 212, 213, 222, 232, 265, 270, 304, 312, 333, 355, 370, 376; ix, 4, 15, 104  
     son of the Khán's daughter, vii, 317  
     sent against the Turks, vii, 317  
     examination of, viii, 3, 57  
 Hurmuzd (Sháh), counselled by Núshírwán, viii, 25 *seq.*  
     Núshírwán's testament in favour of, and last counsels to, viii, 61 *seq.*  
     Reign of, 170, viii, 70  
     Note on, viii, 70  
     character of, viii, 70  
     system of administration of, viii, 71  
     justice of, viii, 71  
         instances of, viii, 90 *seq.*  
     scribes executed by, viii, 71  
     insult of, to Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 76  
     Lazic war renewed by, viii, 76  
     Bahrám Chúbína's gift of swords to, viii, 76  
         accession of, viii, 78  
     turns to evil courses, viii, 81  
         puts to death Ízíd Gas-hasp, viii, 83  
     poisons Zarduhsht, viii, 83 *seq.*  
     schemes against and puts to death Símáh Parzín, viii, 85 *seq.*  
     attempts to suborn Bahrám Ázarmihán, viii, 85 *seq.*, gives audience, viii, 86  
     hears state-secret from Bahrám Ázarmihán, viii, 88  
     puts to death Bahrám Ázarmihán, viii, 89  
     repentance of, viii, 90, 93.  
     places of residence of, viii, 90  
     wars of, viii, 92  
     attacked by Sáwa, viii, 92  
     Sáwa's letter to, viii, 93  
     attacked by Cæsar, viii, 93  
         Khazars, viii, 93  
         Arabs, viii, 93  
     consults the Íránians, viii, 94  
     counselled by his wazír, viii, 94  
     makes peace with Cæsar, viii, 95

- Hurmuzd (Sháh), attacks and defeats the Khazars, viii, 95  
 sends for Mihrán Sitád, viii, 97  
 hears prophecy about Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 98  
 orders search to be made for Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 99  
 discovers and sends for Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 100  
 consults Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 100  
 gives chief command to Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 102  
 questions Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 103  
 gives Rustam's banner to Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 105  
 sends Mihrán with Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 106  
 intelligencer after Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 107  
 to recall Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 108  
 Kharrád, son of Barzín, as envoy to Sáwa, viii, 110  
 hears of Bahrám Chúbína's victory, viii, 132  
 makes thanksgiving, viii, 132  
 rewards Bahrám Chúbína and the troops, viii, 133  
 surveys spoils sent by Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 150  
 grows suspicious of Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 151  
 dismisses the Khán with gifts, viii, 152  
 hears from Kharrád of Bahrám Chúbína's disaffection, viii, 160  
 consults with high priest, viii, 161  
 Áyín Gashasp, viii, 174, 177  
 plans to make away with Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 174  
 hears of Khusrau Parwíz' flight, viii, 176  
 imprisons Bandwí and Gustaham, viii, 176
- Hurmuzd (Sháh), hears of the murder of Áyín Gashasp, viii, 182  
 dethroned and blinded, viii, 183, 200  
 visited in prison by Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 185, 198, 230  
 requests of, to Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 199  
 referred to, viii, 211  
 counsels Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 230  
 murdered, viii, 232
- Hurmuzd Garábzín *or* Galábzín (Kharrád son of Barzín *q.v.*), viii, 190
- Hurmuzd, priest, vii, 188  
 assists Núshírwán in his disputation with Mazdak, vii, 188, 206
- Hurmuzd, Iránian general, vii, 251  
 commands the outposts in Núshírwán's army, vii, 251
- Hurmuzd (Hurmuzdsháh, Farukh-Hurmuzd *q.v.*), father of Rustam, ix, 72, 78, 85, 89, 96
- Hurmuzd Shahránguráz (Shahránguráz *q.v.*), ix, 54
- Hurmuzd, devotee, ix, 102  
 pleads with Máhwí for Yazdagird, ix, 102
- Hurmuzdagán, vi, 193, 199  
 battle of, vi, 193, 199, 202, 256
- Husain, friend of Firdausí, ix, 121
- Húshang, son of Siyámak, minister of Gaiúmart, and Sháh, 139, 140, i, 42, 90, 91, 126; ii, 204; iv, 133, 286, 292, 302; v, 180, 245; vii, 37, 273; viii, 376; ix, 25, 41
- Firdausí's etymology of, i, 121  
 goes with Gaiúmart to fight the Black Div, i, 121  
 slays the Black Div, i, 121  
 Reign of, 140, i, 122

- Húshang, Reign of, Note on, i, 122  
 succeeds Gaiúmart, i, 122  
 culture hero, i, 123  
 discovers fire, i, 123  
 institutes Fire-worship, i, 123  
 founds the Feast of Sada, i, 124  
 domesticates animals, i, 124  
 dies, i, 124  
 Firdausi's reflections on, i, 124  
 rites of, vii, 53  
 Faith of, viii, 380  
 Húshdív, Túránian hero, v, 46  
 put in charge of the rear, v, 46  
 Húshyár, astrologer, vi, 372, 375  
 takes Bahrá'm Gúr's horoscope vi, 176  
 Hushravah (Kai Khusrau, *q.v.*), iv, 137, 138  
 Hutaosa, wife of Gushtásp, v, 11  
 = Atossa (?), v, 11  
 Huyaonas (Khyons, Chionitae ?), people, v, 13  
 Hyapates, son of Semiramis, v, 292  
 Hydaspes, *id.*  
 Hydaspes (Jhílám), river in the Punjáb, vi, 18, 31, 62, 63  
 Hydraotes (Rávi), river in the Punjáb, vi, 64  
 Hyperboreans, the, vi, 74  
 Elysium of, vi, 74  
 Hyphasis (Beas), river in the Punjáb, vi, 64  
 Hyrcania (Gurgán, *q.v.*), ii, 27 ; iii, 10 ; vi, 373  
 Giv, prince of, iii, 9  
 Hystaspes (Gushtásp, *q.v.*), iv, 314 *seq.*  
 Hystaspes, father of Darius I, v, 10  
 governor of Parthia, v, 10

## I

- IBLís, the Muhammadan Devil, 140, 143, iv, 206, 282 ; v, 174, 218

- IBlís, occasional substitution of for Áhriman in the Sháh-náma, i, 50, 70 ; ii, 82, 110  
 tempts Zakhák, i, 136 *seq.*  
 turns cook, i, 137 *seq.*  
 causes serpents to grow out of Zakhák's shoulders, i, 139  
 counsels, garbed as a leech, Zakhák, i, 139  
 Ibn Mukaffá', Persian scholar and Arabic writer, vi, 373 ; vii, 161  
 account of, vi, 17  
 translator of the Bástán-náma into Arabic, vi, 17  
 Fables of Bidpai (the Book of Kalíla and Dimna) into Arabic, vii, 383  
 Ibrá'hím, Abraham the patriarch, vi, 119, 120  
 house of = the Kaaba, vi, 119  
 Ichthyophagi, vi, 81  
 Sikandar and, vi, 69, 147  
 Arrian on, vi, 69  
 modern accounts of, vi, 70  
 city of, described, vi, 177  
 go to meet, and are visited by, Sikandar, vi, 178  
 hand over the treasures of Kai Khusrau to Sikandar, vi, 178  
 Íd-i-Kurdí, Feast of, i, 143  
 Ighrírás (Aghraá'ratha, Aghré-rad, Aghrírás), brother of Afrásiyáb and Túránian hero, 142, i, 92, 337, 342 *seq.* ; ii, 18, 20, 303, 304 ; iii, 8 ; iv, 136, 206, 262  
 characterised, i, 55, 338  
 opposes war with Írán, i, 343  
 Bármán's single combat, i, 347  
 over-ruled by Pashang, i, 344  
 Afrásiyáb, i, 347  
 Íránian captives saved by, i, 363  
 released by, i, 365 *seq.*



- Ighrîras, upbraided and slain by  
 Atrâsiyâb, i, 367  
 Pashang's grief for, i, 374  
 revival of, in legend, iv, 135  
 given a command, iv 156  
 head of, sent by Kai Khus-  
 rau to Kai Kâús, iv, 185  
 referred to, iv, 267
- Ijâs bin Kabîsa, viii, 188  
 governor of Hîra, viii, 190
- Îlá, Túrânian king, iv, 182  
 fights with Kai Khusrau, iv,  
 182
- Ilyâs, ruler of Khazar *q.v.*, 154,  
 iv, 361  
 tribute demanded of, by  
 Cæsar, iv, 352  
 refuses tribute and declares  
 war, iv, 352  
 makes overtures to Gush-  
 tâsp, iv, 354  
 corpse of, brought by Gush-  
 tâsp to Cæsar, iv, 355
- Imagery, of Shâhnâma. *See*  
 Shâhnâma.
- Imaus, Greek form of Himálaya  
*q.v.*, vi, 12
- 'Inânian, 'Inâniâns, Arab tribe,  
 vi, 324, 330, 331, 333
- Ind. *See* Hind.
- India, iv, 316; vi, 17, 64, 81, 83,  
 204  
 Írániâns and Aryans of, i, 15  
 Palladius on, vi, 61  
*Ancient*, M'Crimble's, quoted,  
 vi, 68  
 =Ethiopia, vi, 68
- Indian, Indians, 172, vi, 81, 375,  
 397; vii, 135, 146; viii,  
 377  
 =Ethiopiâns, vi, 13, 68  
 sages, vi, 61, 83, 91 *seq.*, 143  
*seq.*, 266  
 bells and gongs, vi, 175;  
 viii, 46, 120  
 bane, vi, 259  
 king of=Shangul, vii, 118  
 tongue, vii, 117, 143  
 sword, falchion, scimitar, viii,  
 127, 145, 417; ix, 17  
 Garden of the, viii, 196
- Indian, Indians, Faith of, 172,  
 viii, 275  
 script, ix, 17  
 scribe, ix, 17
- Indies, Greek idea of two, vi, 13  
 duplicate races in, vi, 68
- Indo-European race, i, 7  
 Asiatic branch of, i, 7  
 Aryans, i, 7  
 early seats of, i, 7  
 religion of, i, 7
- Indra, Indian god, ii, 25; vi, 203  
 Vîitra and, ii, 25; vi, 203
- Indus, river, i, 71, 252; ii, 21;  
 iii, 177, 204, 237, 251; v,  
 293; vi, 62, 67, 70; vii,  
 241  
 mistaken for the Nile, vi, 68
- Introduction, to Shâhnâma, i, 3  
*seq.*
- Iollas, Alexander the Great's cup-  
 bearer, vi, 82
- Íraj, youngest son of Farídún  
*q.v.* and the protagonist  
 of the frânian race, 140, i,  
 54, 90, 91, 211; ii, 8, 16,  
 19, 20, 237, 297, 302; iii, 8;  
 iv, 146; v, 42, 44, 261;  
 vi, 353; vii, 73; viii, 266,  
 376 and *note*, 392; ix, 103  
 etymology of, i, 174  
 naming of, i, 188  
 horoscope of, i, 188  
 receives Írán and Arabia as  
 his portion, i, 189  
 abdication of, demanded by  
 Salm and Túr, i, 192  
 offers to go to his brothers,  
 i, 196  
 visits Salm and Túr, i, 198  
 reception of, by Salm and  
 Túr, i, 198  
 offers to resign his kingship  
 to his brothers, i, 200  
 slain by Túr and Salm, i,  
 201  
 head of, sent to Farídún, i,  
 202  
 mourning for, i, 203 *seq.*  
 daughter of, 140, i, 205  
 married to Pashang, i, 205

Íraj, daughter of, gives birth to  
 Minúchihr, i, 206  
 vengeance for, i, 215 *seq.*  
 referred to, i, 335, 349  
 Íraj, king of Kábul, iv, 146  
 'Írák, ix, 66  
 = 'Írák 'Arabí (Babylonia),  
 vii, 214, 224  
 Iram, gardens of, i, 100, 113;  
 ii, 78; vii, 235 and  
*note*  
 Írán, 142-144, 146, 148, 150, 152-  
 155, 157, 158, 162, 163,  
 165, 167, 172, 173, 175,  
 176, i, 3, 113, 152, 153  
 and *passim*  
 boundaries of, i, 3  
 physical features of, i, 3  
 gradual desiccation of, i, 3  
 and *see* Drought.  
 climate of, i, 4  
 flora of, i, 4  
 fauna of, i, 5  
 land of contrasts, i, 5, 58,  
 60  
 cosmogony of, i, 5  
 people of, i, 6  
 -vej, region, i, 9  
 situation of, i, 9  
 Zoroaster's (Zarduhsht's)  
 birth-place, i, 62  
 Arab conquest of, i, 12  
 Arabia and, Íraj's portion,  
 i, 189  
 -Shahr, ii, 81  
 fought for by Afrásiyáb and  
 the Arabs, ii, 92  
 invaded by Suhráb, ii, 130  
 lord of = Mahmúd, iv, 142  
 monarch of = Dáráb, vi, 21,  
 26  
 and Sháhnáma compared,  
 vi, 193  
 invaded by Munzir and  
 Nu'mán, vi, 397  
 Rúm's tribute to explained, i,  
 vii, 187  
 Íránian, Íránians, 144, 147-151,  
 153, 155, 163-167, 171,  
 176, i, 9 and *passim*  
 neighbours of, i, 9

Íránians, historical relations of,  
 with Semites, i, 10  
 Assyrians, i, 10  
 Arabs, i, 11; vi, 17; ix,  
 65 *seq.*  
 Greeks and Romans, i, 14  
 Aryans of India, i, 15  
 Túránians, i, 16 *seq.*  
 Kummerians, i, 17  
 Scythians, i, 17  
 Parthians, i, 18  
 Alani, i, 19  
 Huns, i, 19  
 Turks, i, 20  
 traditional relations of, with  
 other Indo - Europeans,  
 Semites, and Túránians, i,  
 54, 55, 56  
 revolt against Jamshíd and  
 summon Zakhák to Írán,  
 i, 139  
 chiefs of, imprisoned at  
 Sarí, i, 363  
 plot for release with Igh-  
 ríras, i, 363  
 inform Zál, i, 366  
 released by Kishwád, i,  
 367  
 provided for by Zál, i,  
 367  
 bewail Naudar, i, 364  
 wish to withdraw from the  
 Seven Stages, v, 135  
 encouraged to persevere by  
 Asfandiyár, v, 136  
 provoked to combat by  
 Zawára, v, 225  
 Sikandar's proclamation to,  
 vi, 44  
 bewail themselves, vi, 48  
 counsel Dárá to come to  
 terms with Sikandar, vi,  
 48  
 ask quarter of Sikandar, vi,  
 51  
 hail Sikandar as ruler, vi, 56  
 after Yazdagird son of  
 Shápúr's death meet for  
 counsel in Párs, vi, 394  
 Jawanwí sent by, to Mun-  
 zir, vi, 397

Íránians, offer prayer at the Fire-fane of Barzín, vi, 400  
 loyal, support Bahrám Gúr, vi, 402  
 procedure of, to elect a Sháh, vi, 403  
 decide to reject Bahrám Gúr, vi, 403  
 remonstrated with by Munzir, vi, 403  
 object-lesson of, to Munzir, vi, 404  
 accept Bahrám Gúr's proposal for settling the question of kingship by ordeal, vi, 406  
 ask Munzir to intercede with Bahrám Gúr for them, vii, 9  
 arrears of taxes of, cancelled, vii, 11  
 levied by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 86  
 resolve to submit to the Khán, vii, 87  
 send Humái as envoy to the Khán, vii, 87  
 letter of, to the Khán, vii, 87  
 ask for Narsi's good offices with Bahrám Gúr, vii, 93  
 lament for the death of Píruz, vii, 169  
 revolt against Kubád, vii, 195  
 put Kubád in fetters, vii, 195  
 ask pardon of Kubád, vii, 200  
 pardoned by Kubád, vii, 200  
 take Sakíla, viii, 47  
 chiefs received in audience by Hurmuzd, viii, 86  
 consulted by Hurmuzd, viii, 94  
 defeat the Khazars, viii, 96  
 advise Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 102, 121, 239 *seq.*, 287  
 Sáva employs sorcery against, viii, 123  
 encouraged by Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 124

Íránian, Íránians, defeat the Turks, viii, 126  
 revolt against Hurmuzd, viii, 156  
 elect Bahrám Chúbína Sháh, viii, 243  
 homage Shirwí, ix, 8  
 choose two chiefs to visit Khusrau Parwíz in prison, ix, 9  
 plot against Guráz, ix, 54  
 go hunting with Guráz, ix, 55  
 race, ix, 65  
 enmity of, with Semite, i, 54; ix, 65  
 announces arrival of Shu'ba Mughíra to Rustam, ix, 82  
 defeat of, at Kádísíya, ix, 84  
 retreat to Yazdagird, ix, 85  
 -born, ix, 99  
 defeat of, at Marv, ix, 116  
 ambushed, ix, 118  
 Irmá'íl and Karmá'íl, Zahhák's cooks, 140, i, 146  
 Irmán, (Arman *q.v.*), i, 345, 358; iii, 12, 285, 292, 296, 311  
 devastated by wild boars, iii, 290  
 Irmánians (Armenians *q.v.*), 150, iii, 286  
 complain to Kai Khusrau of the wild boars, iii, 290  
 Iron steeds, Sikandar's, vi, 115  
 Ísá (Jesus), viii, 276 *note*  
 Isdigird I (Yazdagird son of Shápúr), Sásanian king, vi, 371  
 Isdigird II (Yazdagird son of Bahrám Gúr), Sásanian king, vii, 153  
 Ishmael, vi, 65, 120, 121  
 Iskandar. *See* Sikandar.  
 Iskandar, herb, vi, 26  
 Iskandariya (Alexandria), 160, vi, 185  
 Sikandar buried at, vi, 185  
 Island, the=Meroe, vi, 65  
 Islands, Male and Female, vi, 72  
 origin of legend of, vi, 72

- Ismá'íl. *See* Ishmael.  
 Ismá'íl, brother of Sultán Mahmúd, i, 21  
 Isnápwi. *See* Ispanwí.  
 Ispabán, city in 'Irak-i-'Ajámí, 146, i, 351; ii, 394, 399; iii, 109; vi, 57, 86, 87, 199, 201, 202, 210; vii, 6, 84, 214, 224; viii, 90 given to Gúdarz, ii, 78; iv, 129  
 arrival of Kai Khusrau at, ii, 396  
 bestowed on Giv by Kai Khusrau, iv, 298  
 Ispanwí, slave-girl of Tazháv, iii, 14, 27, 77  
 taken captive by Bizhan, iii, 78  
 Ispurúz, mountain in the neighbourhood of Mázan-darán, ii, 38, 56, 57, iv, 136, 230  
 Israfil, archangel, 160, vi, 78  
 Sikandar's interview with, vi, 83, 161  
 Issedones, tribe situated on the Tarim basin in eastern Turkistán, iii, 192  
 Issus, town, plain, and gulf in Cilicia, vi, 30  
 battle of, vi, 30, 31  
 Dárius' family taken prisoners at, vi, 31  
 Istakhr (Persepolis), city in Párs, 142, 165, ii, 11, 22, 28, 339; vi, 57, 198, 199, 202, 211, 223, 225, 231, 326, 356, 386; vii, 83, 95, 188; viii, 90, 313; ix, 50, 54  
 buildings at, attributed to Humái, v, 293  
 Dára marches from, to encounter Sikandar, vi, 37, 46  
 returns to, vi, 44  
 Sikandar crowned Sháh at, vi, 59  
 taken by Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 227  
 Istakhr, Ardshír Pápakán marches from, against the Kurds, vi, 230  
 returns victorious to, vi, 232  
 Yazdagird taken to, ix, 64  
 made Sháh at, ix, 65  
 Istuvegu. *See* Astyages.  
 Italy, vii, 218  
 Alexander of Epirus' expedition to, vi, 12  
 Alexander the Great's legendary expedition to, vi, 12, 30  
 Íwán-i-Kerkh, vi, 327  
 Izads (Yazatas), the, iii, 286  
 Ízid, viii, 75  
 Ízid Gashasp, archscribe, 170, viii, 74  
 confusion in name of, viii, 75, 76  
 put to death by Hurmuzd, viii, 75, 83  
 malicious speech of, viii, 77  
 and *note*, 150 and *note*  
 imprisoned, viii, 81  
 sends for high priest, viii, 81  
 Ízid Gashasp, Íránian warrior, viii, 103, 122, 136, 138, 149, 350, 353, 356  
 conducts spoil to Írán, viii, 148  
 goes hunting with Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 156  
 speech of, viii, 165
- J
- JABALA BIN SÁLIM, viii, 73  
 Jacob of Sarúg, Syriac poet.  
 Syriac Christian Legend of Alexander the Great versified by, vi, 15, 74, 78, 84  
 Jádústán, vi, 109 and *note*  
 Jagatai, mountain-range in Khurásán, v, 29  
 Jahn, son of Afrásiyáb, Túránian hero, 152, i, 92; ii, 264, 268; iv, 156, 162, 200 *seq.*, 214

- Jahn, son of Afrásiyáb, sent to guard Shída's rear, iv, 155  
 advances to the attack and is defeated by Kárán, iv, 178  
 stationed at the centre with Afrásiyáb, iv, 179  
 sent to the left with troops, iv, 180  
 Garsíwaz and, compel Afrásiyáb to quit the field, iv, 182  
 commands the right, iv, 190  
 helps to defend Gang-bihisht, iv, 209  
 taken prisoner by Rustam, iv, 210  
 sent to Kai Káuś, iv, 233  
 interned by Kai Káuś, iv, 235  
 spurious passage about, iv, 272 *note*
- Jahn, architect of throne of Tákhdis, viii, 391
- Jahram (Chahram), 161, 163, city in Párs, vi, 44, 119, 202, 225, 237, 241, 268, 400; vii, 185; ix, 29, 61  
 Dará goes to, vi, 44  
 desert of, vi, 401
- Jáj (? Chách *q.v.*), iv, 150
- Jalálpúr, city in the northern Punjáb, vi, 18
- Jalúlá, town north-east of Baghdád, i, 12, ix, 68  
 battle of, i, 12, ix, 68
- Jam, son of Kubád and brother of Núshírwán, vii, 316  
 conspires against Núshírwán, vii, 316
- Jámásp, chief minister of Sháh Gushtásp, 155, i, 42; ii, 9; v, 12, 22, 24 *seq.*, 58, 206, 216, 248; viii, 171, 393; ix, 26  
 omniscience of, v, 19, 48  
 answers, in conjunction with Zarír and Asfandiyár, Arjás's letter, v, 42
- Jámásp, foretells the death in battle of Ardshír, v, 49  
 Shídaśp, v, 50  
 Girámí, v, 50  
 exploits of Nastúr, v, 50  
 death of Nívzár, v, 51  
 Zarír, v, 52, 70 *note*  
 triumph of Asfandiyár, v, 52  
 defeat of Arjás, v, 52  
 encourages Gushtásp to fight, v, 54  
 referred to, v, 59, 102  
 dissuades Gushtásp from avenging Zarír, v, 64, 68  
 made archmage of fire-temple built by Gushtásp, v, 75  
 sent to recall Asfandiyár to court, v, 80 *seq.*  
 advises Gushtásp, when beleaguered by Arjás, to release Asfandiyár, v, 97  
 volunteers to go to Asfandiyár, v, 97  
 reaches Gumbadán in disguise, v, 98  
 interview of, with Asfandiyár, v, 99 *seq.*  
 sends for blacksmiths to unchain Asfandiyár, v, 101  
 sets off with Asfandiyár, Bahman, and Núsh Ázar, v, 103  
 foretells Asfandiyár's fate, v, 169  
 reproached by Bishútan, v, 254  
 advises Gushtásp to write to Bahman, v, 257  
 writes by Gushtásp's orders to recall Bahman, v, 258  
 Gushtásp tells his intention as to the succession to, v, 279  
 prophecy of, viii, 68  
 additions of, to throne of Tákhdis, viii, 392
- Jámásp, son of Pírúz, 166, vi, 3  
 supersedes Kubád temporarily, vii, 184, 195

- Jámásp, son of Pírúz, title of, vii, 186  
 fate of, vii, 186, 200
- James, St., bishop of Edessa, i, 374
- James V of Scotland, vii, 3  
 Bahrám Gúr's resemblance to, vii, 3
- Jamhúr, king of Hind, vii, 395, 396, 398, 399, 401, 403
- Jamshíd, son of Tahmúras, Sháh and culture-hero, 140, 164, i, 42, 90, 91; ii, 4, 33, 37, 168, 204, 358, 399; iii, 7, 57, 257, 273; iv, 63, 133, 149, 203, 206, 272, 274, 290; v, 32, 34, 38, 47, 180, 202, 215, 216, 245, 271, 284; vi, 45 and *note*, 172, 209; vii, 36 *seq.*, 107, 162, 173, 211; viii, 22, 242, 269, 310, 332, 341, 387; ix, 25, 39, 103  
 Reign of, 140, i, 129 *seq.*  
*Note on*, i, 129 *seq.*  
 the Íránian Noah, i, 129  
 meaning of, i, 130  
 ascends the throne, i, 131  
 greatness of, i, 131  
 culture-hero, i, 132  
 makes armour, i, 132  
 raiment, i, 132  
 institutes castes, i, 132  
 great builder, i, 133  
 introduces jewelry and perfumes, i, 133  
 leechcraft, i, 133  
 ship-building, i, 133  
 carried by the dívs into the air, i, 133  
 feast held in memorial of, i, 134  
 fall of, i, 130, 134, 139  
 Íránians revolt against, i, 139  
 flight and death of, i, 139  
 sisters of, married to Zahhák, i, 146  
 found by Farídún, 140, i, 162  
 referred to, iv, 304
- Jamshíd, treasure of, found by Bahrám Gúr, 164, vii, 36  
 described, vii, 36
- Jandal, envoy of Farídún, 140, i, 177  
 asks Sarv's daughters in marriage for Farídún's sons, i, 178  
 informs Farídún of the outcome of his mission, i, 182
- Jandal, city in Hind, vii, 140  
 monarch of, entertained by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 140 *seq.*
- Jánfurúz, Íránian general, viii, 297
- Jánúsiyár, minister of Dará, vi, 52, 88  
 murders Dará, vi, 52  
 informs Sikandar of Dará's murder, vi, 52  
 arrested by Sikandar, vi, 53  
 executed, vi, 56, 88
- Jaranjás, Túránian hero, iv, 156
- Jaríra, daughter of Pírán, wife of Siyáwush, and mother of Farúd, 147, i, 92; ii, 3; iii, 43  
 married to Siyáwush, ii, 268 *seq.*  
 birth of her son Farúd, ii, 291  
 referred to, iii, 39  
 advises Farúd, iii, 42  
 dream of, iii, 63  
 kills herself, iii, 66
- Jarmana, place, ix, 93
- Jasha, king, i, 67, 68
- Játakas, vii, 383
- Jats, people of north-western India, vii, 6  
 fabulous origin of, vii, 6
- Jawánwí, Íránian magnate, vi, 373; vii, 8, 10  
 goes as ambassador to Munzir, vi, 398  
 interview of, with Munzir, vi, 398 *seq.*  
 recognises the divine Grace in Bahrám Gúr, vi, 398 *seq.*

- Jawánwi, suggests a course of action to Munzir, vi, 400  
 returns to Írán, vi, 400  
 bidden by Bahráw Gúr to remit the arrears of taxes, vii, 11
- Jaz (Gaz), town north-west of Ispahán, vi, 337; vii, 76, 79, 80  
 tribute of, remitted, vii, 82
- Jerusalem, v, 306 *note*, vi, 81; viii, 191, 196  
 Elevation of the True Cross at, ix, 43
- Jesus, i, 42; viii, 191; ix, 10  
 sayings of, viii, 276 and *note*  
 Cross of, viii, 380  
 laughter of, viii, 191, 380
- Jew, Jews, 168, vi, 356; vii, 13, 273; viii, 21, 67, 276  
 Faith of, vi, 95  
 Bahráw Gúr's adventure with a, vii, 16 *seq.*  
 persecution of, vii, 153  
 Zúrán's plot with a, against Mahbúd, vii, 320 *seq.*  
 bewitches Núshírwán's food, vii, 321  
 makes confession to Núshírwán, vii, 325  
 Fables of Bidpai, vogue of largely due to, vii, 383
- Jewelled tree, Kai Khusrau's, iii, 329
- Jeweller, a, 164. *See* Máhiyár.  
 daughter of, 164
- Jewels, discovery of, i, 133  
 Palace of, 160
- Jhílám (Hydaspes), river in the Punjáb, vi, 18, 31, 63
- Jíhún (Oxus *q.v.*) river, 146, 152, i, 215, 219, 345, 375; ii, 15, 19 *seq.*, 99, 229, 237, 248, 258, 311, 340, 390, 394, 399, 404; iii, 58, 159; iv, 10, 12, 20, 53, 60, 79, 153, 154, 157, 181, 184, 187, 194, 255, 304; v, 12, 29, 40, 45, 48, 203; vii, 92, 165, 166, 180, 329, 338, 340; viii, 94, 99.
- Jíhún—*cont.*  
 134, 174, 332; ix, 77, 115, 118  
 boundary between Írán and Túrán i, 71, 370, 371  
 confused with the Aras, i, 370  
 fords of, viii, 331
- Jins, ix, 81
- Johari Das, Babu, quoted, vi, 81
- Joktan, vi, 65  
 = Kahtán, vi, 65
- Joshua, vi, 77  
 Moses and, Muhammadan legend of, vi, 77
- Jovian (Bazánúsh), Roman Emperor (A.D. 363-4), vi, 324 *seq.*; viii, 41  
 confused with Valerian, vi, 324
- Judaism, vi, 327
- Judda, the port of Mecca, 159, vi, 121  
 Sikandar arrives at, vi, 121
- Julian (Yánús), Roman Emperor (A.D. 361-363), i, 12; vi, 325  
 confused with Valerian, vi, 324  
 not an emperor in the Sháh-náma, vi, 324, 326  
 expedition of, against Persia, vi, 324 *seq.*
- Julius Valerius, early Latin translator of the Pseudo-Callisthenes, vi, 14, 61, 66 *seq.*, 71, 74, 78, 79, 81
- Jund-i-Shápúr (Gund-i-Shápúr *q.v.*), city, vi, 256  
 = Rás-Shápúr, vi, 256  
 foundation of attributed to Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 266
- Jupiter, planet, i, 72, 161, 188, 281; ii, 115; iii, 318; iv, 143, 295; v, 256; vi, 138, 172, 292; vii, 49, 248, 357; viii, 28, 152, 157, 395
- Justin I, Eastern Roman Emperor, vii, 316

Justin II, Eastern Roman Emperor, vii, 212; viii, 41  
 Justinian, Eastern Roman Emperor, i, 16; vii, 212, 219, 317; viii, 41  
   silkworm introduced into the West during reign of, vi, 204  
   bargains of, with Núshírwán, vii, 214, 216 *seq.*  
   protection of Hárith bin Jabala by, leads to war with Núshírwán, vii, 217  
   successes of, in the West, vii, 217  
   closes the schools of Athens, vii, 280  
 Juyá, a div, ii, 71  
   slain by Rustam, ii, 72

## K

KAABA, the, 159, vi, 65  
   account of, vi, 65  
   Sikandar's expedition to, vi, 67, 83, 119  
 Kabáb, small pieces of meat skewered together for roasting, ii, 103; iii, 69; iv, 121; v, 152; viii, 250  
 Kabísa, viii, 188  
 Kabtún, king of Misr and the progenitor of the Copts, vi, 121  
   welcomes Sikandar, vi, 121  
   praises Kaidáfa to Sikandar, vi, 122  
 Kabúda, 147, one of Afrásiyáb's herdsmen, iii, 73  
   slain by Bahrám, iii, 74  
 Kábul, Kábulistán (Afghánistán), city and country, 141, 157, i, 57, 252, 264, 268, 277, 282, 283, 286, 294, 298, 299 *note*, 300, 302 *seq.*, 316, 357, 378; ii, 12, 18, 21, 92, 228, 260, 271, 341; iii, 17, 35, 145, 153, 165, 174, 186, 190, 202, 206, 321; iv, 14, 65, Kábul—*cont.*  
   146, 278, 283, 292; v, 126, 170, 173, 224, 242, 251, 260, 263 *seq.*, 271, 273 *seq.*, 284, 287; vi, 207; vii, 173  
   Buddhism in, i, 15  
   superseded by Brahmanism, i, 16  
   dagger of, i, 219; vi, 320  
   Zál visits, i, 256  
   Beauty of = Rúdába, i, 262, 316  
   monarch of = Mihráb, i, 294, 365  
   rejoicings at, over Zál's successful embassy to Minúchíhr, i, 314  
   preparations at, to welcome Sám and Zál, i, 315  
   falchion of, i, 376; ix, 98  
   Shaghád sent to be brought up at, v, 264  
   king of, 157, v, 264, 271  
   daughter of, marries Shaghád, v, 264  
   Shaghád and, plot against Rustam, v, 265 *seq.*  
   gives a feast, v, 266  
   pretends to quarrel with Shaghád, v, 266  
   treachery of, v, 268 *seq.*  
   abases himself before Rustam, v, 269  
   entertains Rustam and invites him to hunt, v, 269  
   hypocrisy of, v, 271  
   Farámarz sent against, v, 274, 276  
   defeated and put to death with all his kin, v, 277  
   tribute of, question about, v, 265  
   Farámarz makes a Zábulí king of, v, 277  
   monarch of, entertained by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 140 *seq.*  
 Káchár Báshí, city in Túrán, ii, 258, 360, 361; vii, 330, 358; ix, 117



- Kádísí, Kádísíya, town on one of the canals west of the Euphrates and south of Mashad 'Alí (Nedjef), vi, 119, 330; ix, 5, 73, 74, 77, 78  
 battle of, i, 12, 143; ix, 5, 67, 69  
 date of, ix, 67  
 canal of, ix, 69  
 Rustam advances to, ix, 73  
 Kaékasta (Urumiah *q.v.*), lake, iv, 137  
 Káf, mythical Mount Alburz *q.v.*, ii, 83, 404; iv, 65, 149; viii, 66 and *note*  
 Káfúr, king of Bídád, 149, iii, 191  
 worsts the Íránians, iii, 244  
 slain by Rustam, iii, 245  
 Kahtán, desert of, i, 287  
 Kahtán, the Arabic form of Joktan, the progenitor of the southern Arabs, vi, 65, 120  
 Kai, meaning of, ii, 8  
 Kaian, Kaiánian (*see* Kai), ii, 8, 9, 22, 404; iii, 5 *seq.*, 9, 14, 43, 67, 112, 147, 307, 318, 320, 328, 342; iv, 5 *seq.*, 24, 33, 35, 65, 110, 127, 150, 166, 175, 234, 260, 262, 269, 273, 279, 285, 286, 289, 293, 308, 319, 324; v, 7 *seq.*, 10, 47, 49, 52, 54, 57, 59, 60, 67 *seq.*, 73 *seq.*, 79, 86, 91, 97, 122, 168, 203, 210, 223, 253, 254, 282, 288, 289, 291, 311; vi, 9 *seq.*, 17, 34, 48, 55, 57, 59, 81, 112, 125, 141, 179, 180, 194, 199, 200, 202, 210, 223, 237 *note*; viii, 65, 216  
 dynasty, i, 49, 373; ii, 7 *seq.*; iii, 5 *seq.*; iv, 5 *seq.*; v, 7 *seq.*; vi, 9 *seq.*  
 genealogical table, ii, 3  
 birth-mark, ii, 372  
 stature, ii, 375  
 saying, iv, 33  
 Kaian, throne, viii, 214  
 race, viii, 217  
 crown, ix, 11, 105  
 Kaiánúsh (Katáiún), brother of Farídún, i, 90, 91, 158 v, 261  
 referred to, i, 147, 165  
 Purmáya and, summon the smiths to Farídún, i, 158  
 go with Farídún against Zakhák, i, 159  
 attempt to kill Farídún, i, 160  
 Kai Árash, son of Kai Kubád, ii, 3, 23, 204, 205; vi, 197, 210, 228; viii, 216  
 Kai Armín, son of Kai Kubád, ii, 3, 23  
 Kaid, Indian king, 159, 161, i, 55; vi, 61, 83, 91 *seq.*, 112  
 identical with Mandanes (Dandamis), vi, 62  
 consults Mihrán about his dreams, vi, 92 *seq.*  
 dreams of, interpreted by Mihrán, vi, 94, *seq.*  
 Four Wonders of, 159, vi, 94, 97 and *note*, 99 *seq.*  
 daughter, 159, vi, 94, 100, 102, 104  
 described, vi, 100, 102, 104  
 married to Sikandar, vi, 104  
 reference in Sikandar's Will to, vi, 182  
 cup, described, vi, 94, 100  
 principle of, explained, vi, 109  
 leech, vi, 94, 101  
 prescribes for Sikandar, vi, 107  
 sage, vi, 94, 101  
 =Calanus, vi, 62  
 Sikandar's encounter of wits with, vi, 62, 104 *seq.*  
 explains the principle of the cup, vi, 109

Kaid, sends his Four Wonders  
and other gifts to Si-  
kandar, vi, 103  
revival of, in legend, vi, 256,  
266  
prophecy of, vi, 256, 257, 267  
consulted by Ardshír Pápa-  
kán, vi, 266  
advice of, to Ardshír Pápa-  
kán, vi, 267, 273  
Kaidáfa (Cilicia), vi, 294, 297  
Kaidáfa (Kandake, Candace *q. v.*),  
159, vi, 83, 121 *seq.*, 325  
obtains Sikandar's portrait,  
vi, 122  
praised by Kabtún to Sikan-  
dar, vi, 122  
receives a letter from  
Sikandar, vi, 123  
answers Sikandar's letter, vi,  
123  
welcomes Kaidrúsh on his  
return from captivity, vi,  
127  
receives Naitkún (Sikandar)  
graciously, vi, 128  
state of, described, vi, 128,  
130, 133  
gives audiences to Naitkún  
(Sikandar), vi, 128 *seq.*  
recognises Sikandar, vi, 129  
*seq.*  
hears Sikandar's embassy,  
vi, 129  
covenants of, with Sikandar,  
vi, 132, 138  
warns Sikandar against  
Tainúsh, vi, 133  
chides Tainúsh, vi, 135  
takes counsel with Sikandar  
about Tainúsh, vi, 135  
approves of Sikandar's  
scheme, vi, 137  
takes counsel with her  
nobles, vi, 139  
gifts of, to Sikandar, vi, 140  
Sikandar's final message to,  
vi, 143  
Kaidrúsh (Kandaros, Candaules),  
son of Kaidáfa (Candace),  
vi, 134, 135

Kaidrúsh, wife of, vi, 66  
taken with his wife, by  
Sikandar, vi, 125  
brought with his wife before  
Naitkún, vi, 126  
sentenced with his wife to  
death, vi, 126  
pardoned with his wife, vi,  
126  
gratitude of, vi, 127  
returns to Kaidáfa, vi, 127  
presents Naitkún (Sikan-  
dar) to Kaidáfa, vi, 127  
Kaihan. *See* Kaid.  
Kai Káuś, son of Kai Kubád and  
Sháh, 143-147, 152, 153,  
i, 42, 338; ii, 3, 8 *seq.*, 23  
*seq.*, 33 *seq.*, 54 *seq.*, 61  
*seq.*, 109, 110, 127, 130,  
233, 243 *seq.*, 264, 269  
*seq.*, 273, 284, 286, 290,  
296, 301, 316, 318, 319,  
335, 347, 361, 364, 371,  
372, 383, 401, iii, 7, 9,  
13, 14, 20 *seq.*, 24, 30, 45,  
51, 84, 85, 88, 90, 93, 96,  
113, 145, 147, 166, 174, 236,  
238, 239, 289, 307, 327;  
iv, 13, 61, 129, 135, 136,  
162, 167 *seq.*, 185, 191,  
199, 201, 203, 217, 218,  
232 *seq.*, 254, 256 *seq.*, 269  
*seq.*, 278, 287, 289, 290,  
292, 295 *seq.*, 306, 310,  
314, 321 *seq.*; v, 29, 30,  
116, 173, 174, 190, 203,  
207, 208, 210, 215, 216;  
vii, 74, 107, 115; viii,  
22, 104, 168, 270, 341; ix,  
25  
Reign of, 143, ii, 25 *seq.*  
Notes on, ii, 25 *seq.*, 79  
*seq.*, 118, 188 *seq.*, 335  
visits Rustam, ii, 83  
tempted by dís, ii, 30 *seq.*,  
82, 102 *seq.*  
goes to Mount Káf, ii, 83  
defeats Afrásiyáb and re-  
gains Irán, ii, 100  
makes Rustam paladin of  
paladins, ii, 101

Kai Káuś, buildings of, on Mount Alburz, ii, 81, 101  
 flying-machine of, ii, 103  
 fall of, from the sky, ii, 104 :  
     v, 174  
 repentance of, ii, 105  
 hears of Suhráb and summons his chiefs, ii, 136  
     *seq.*  
 bids Tús hang Rustam and Gív, ii, 143  
 apology of, to Rustam, ii, 147  
 encampment of, described, ii, 153  
     overthrown by Suhráb, ii, 160  
 refuses to cure Suhráb, ii, 178  
 attempts to console Rustam, ii, 181  
 marries the future mother of Siyáwush, ii, 194  
 receives Siyáwush at court, ii, 198  
 bestows Kuhistán upon Siyáwush, ii, 199  
 conduct of, in the case of Siyáwush and Súdába, ii, 200 *seq.*  
 sends Siyáwush to fight Afrásiyáb, ii, 225  
 rejects terms of peace and quarrels with Rustam, ii, 244 *seq.*  
 hears of the defection of Siyáwush, ii, 258  
 grief of, at the death of Siyáwush, ii, 337  
 hears of Kai Khusrau's arrival in Irán, ii, 395  
 receives Kai Khusrau, ii, 397  
 rewards Gív, ii, 399  
 provides for Farangís, ii, 399  
 arbitrates between Tús and Gúdarz, ii, 403 *seq.*  
 welcomes Kai Khusrau on his return from the castle of Bahman, ii, 410

Kai Káuś, requires Kai Khusrau to swear vengeance on Afrásiyáb, iii, 21  
 welcomes Gív and hears his tidings of Kai Khusrau, iv, 234  
 gives a feast, iv, 234  
 deals with the captives, iv, 235  
 proclaims the conquest of Túrán and Chín, iv, 236  
 rewards Gív, iv, 236  
 sends Gív back with letter to Kai Khusrau, iv, 238  
 hears that Kai Khusrau is returning and goes with the nobles to welcome him, iv, 256  
 receives gifts from, and hears the adventures of, Kai Khusrau, iv, 257  
 gives a feast in honour of Kai Khusrau, iv, 257  
 counsels a pilgrimage to the temple of Ázargashasp, iv, 258  
 Kai Khusrau and, hear from Gúdarz of Húm's adventure with Afrásiyáb, iv, 264  
 send for Garsíwaz and put him to the torture, iv, 265  
 make thanksgiving before Ázargashasp, iv, 269  
 go in state to the temple of Ázargashasp, iv, 270  
 prays that he may die, iv, 270  
 obsequies of, iv, 271  
 treasure of, called "The Bride" bestowed by Kai Khusrau on Gív, Zál, and Rustam, iv, 295  
 favour shown by Luhrásp to the grandsons of, iv, 318, 321 *seq.*  
 grandsons of, go with Zarír to Rúm, iv, 360  
 hail Gushtásp as Sháh, iv, 362

Kai Káús, Rustam's patent from, v, 203

Kai Khusrau, son of Siyáwush and Farangís, Sháh, 146-154, 160, i, 42, 369; ii, 3, 9, 25, 104, 189, 190, 334 *seq.*, 386 *seq.*; iii, 13 *seq.*, 47, 55, 57, 66, 106, 108, 111 *seq.*, 132, 134, 166, 173, 175, 186, 191, 197, 198, 202, 205, 211, 226, 228, 238 *seq.*, 249, 250, 271, 277, 285, 286, 289, 294 *seq.*, 326 *seq.*, 338, 353 *seq.*; iv, 7 *seq.*, 19, 21, 30, 31, 36, 56 *seq.*, 65, 66, 71, 72, 76 *seq.*, 90, 99, 115, 144 *seq.*, 152, 153, 237 *seq.*, 262, 267 *seq.*, 317 *seq.*, 319, 321; v, 10, 12, 21, 39, 173, 188, 203, 204, 208, 215, 284, 289; vi, 79, 177; vii, 120, 173, 359; viii, 148, 219, 270, 332, 392; ix, 25, 103

fravashi of, ii, 82

identical with Cyrus the Great in legend, ii, 9, 190

prophecies respecting, ii, 310, 372, 390

birth of, ii, 325 *seq.*

account of youth of, ii, 328 *seq.*

questioned by Afrásiyáb, ii, 332

dwells at Siyáwushgird, ii, 333

sent to Khutan, ii, 356

Máchín, ii, 357 *note*

described by Surúsh, ii, 363

Gúdarz sends Gív to seek, ii, 364 *seq.*

recalled, ii, 370

found by Gív, ii, 370

birth-mark of, ii, 372, iii, 49 *note*

saves Pírán's life, ii, 387

at the Jihún, ii, 391 *seq.*

arrives at Zam, ii, 394

visits Gúdarz at Ispahán, ii, 396

Kai Khusrau, tells his story to Kai Káús, ii, 397

praises Gív to Kai Káús, ii, 398

goes to Istakhr, ii, 399

enthroned as Sháh, ii, 400, 411

supported by Gúdarz and opposed by Tús, ii, 400 *seq.*

letter of, to the defenders of the castle of Bahman, ii, 407

establishes Fire-worship at the castle of Bahman, ii, 409

pardons Tús, ii, 410

Reign of, 147, iii, 7 *seq.*

Notes on, iii, 7 *seq.*, 108, 191, 271, 285 *seq.*; iv, 7, 135 *seq.*

last link with the Vedas, iii, 7

longest in respect of subject-matter in the poem, iii, 7

divisions of, iii, 7

episodes of, iii, 7

warlike character of, iii, 8

subject-matter of, iii, 8

accession of, iii, 17

goes on a hunting expedition, iii, 19

to the temple of Ázar-gashasp, iii, 20

swears to take vengeance on Afrásiyáb, iii, 21

prepares for war, iii, 23 *seq.*

offers reward for the head of Paláshán, iii, 26

Crown of Tazháv, iii, 27

slave of Tazháv, iii, 27

head of Tazháv, iii, 28

burning the barricade at the Kása rúd, iii, 28

going on an embassy to Afrásiyáb, iii, 29

warns Tús to avoid Kalát, iii, 39

Kai Khusrau, hears of the death of Farúd and of the defeat of the Iránians, iii, 84  
 wrath of, with Tús, iii, 84  
*seq.*, iii  
 writes to Fariburz, iii, 84  
 disgraces Tús, iii, 86  
 imprisons Tús, iii, 87  
 pardons Tús and the Iránians, iii, 114  
 hears of the peril of the Iránians on Mount Hamáwan and summons Rustam, iii, 142 *seq.*  
 sends Rustam to succour the Iránians, iii, 145  
 furthers the suit of Fariburz to Farangís, iii, 147  
 hears of Rustam's victory, iii, 239  
 disposes of the captives and spoil, iii, 240  
 sends gifts to Rustam and the host, iii, 241  
 goes to meet Rustam on his return in triumph, iii, 267  
 gives a feast to the chiefs, iii, 268  
 rewards Rustam, iii, 269  
 holds a court and hears of the doings of the dív Akwán, iii, 273  
 writes to summon Rustam, iii, 274  
 goes to welcome Rustam on his return from slaying the dív Akwán, iii, 282  
 rewards Rustam, iii, 283  
 hears at a feast of the case of the Irmánians, iii, 289  
 calls for volunteers, iii, 291  
 sends Bízhan and Gurgín to Irmán, iii, 292  
 comforts Gív for the loss of Bízhan, iii, 315, 318  
 imprisons Gurgín, iii, 317  
 promises Gív to consult the divining-cup about Bízhan, iii, 317

Kai Khusrau sends Gív to summon Rustam, iii, 319  
 sends the host to meet Rustam, iii, 327  
 welcomes Rustam, iii, 328  
 jewelled tree of, iii, 329  
 requests Rustam to rescue Bízhan, iii, 330  
 releases Gurgín at Rustam's request, iii, 333  
 equips Rustam for his quest of Bízhan, iii, 333  
 welcomes Rustam on his return, iii, 354  
 rewards Rustam and his comrades, iii, 356  
 holds converse with Bízhan, iii, 356  
 gives gifts to Manízha, iii, 356  
 hears that the Túránians are invading Irán, iv, 12  
 summons his paladins, iv, 13  
 host, iv, 14  
 sends Rustam to Hindústán, iv, 14  
 Luhrásp to the Aláns, iv, 14  
 Ashkash to Khárazm, iv, 15  
 Gúdarz to Túrán, iv, 15  
 orders Gúdarz to negotiate with Pírán, iv, 15  
 receives letter from Gúdarz, iv, 58  
 rewards Hajír, the bearer, iv, 58  
 prays for victory, iv, 58  
 sends Hajír with answer, iv, 61  
 leads a host to aid Gúdarz, iv, 62  
 referred to, iv, 85  
 presage of, that Pírán would be slain by Gúdarz, iv, 85, 88  
 reaches Gúdarz, iv, 111, 126  
 receives Gúdarz and the other champions, iv, 126  
 Gurwí, brought by Gív before, iv, 127

Kai Khusrau, laments over  
 Píran, iv, 127  
 buries Píran and the Túr-  
 ánian champions, iv, 128  
 puts Gurwi to death, iv, 129  
 rewards the host, iv, 129  
 gives Ispahán to Gúdarz,  
 iv, 129  
 pardons the Túránian host,  
 iv, 131  
 amulet of, iv, 133  
 heals Gustaham, iv, 133  
 summons reinforcements,  
 iv, 134, 145  
 Great War of, with Afrásiyáb,  
 152, iv, 135 *seq.*  
 exemption of, from death,  
 iv, 138  
 recalls the troops under  
 Luhrásp, Rustam, and  
 Ashkash, iv, 145  
 stations Tús on his right  
 with Káwa's standard, iv,  
 146  
 gives the right wing to Rus-  
 tam, iv, 147  
 left wing to Gúdarz, iv,  
 147  
 commands to various  
 chiefs, iv, 148, 149  
 hears of Afrásiyáb's passage  
 of the Jíhún, iv, 157  
 sends troops to the aid of  
 Gustaham, son of Nau-  
 dar, at Balkh, iv, 157  
 Ashkash with a host to  
 Zam, iv, 157  
 marches to Khárazm, iv, 157  
 surveys the seat of war and  
 entrenches the host, iv,  
 157  
 Shída's embassy to, iv, 161  
 sends Káran to welcome  
 Shída, iv, 165  
 proposes to fight in single  
 combat, iv, 166  
 rejects the Íránians' sug-  
 gestions of a peace, iv,  
 167  
 accepts Shída's challenge,  
 iv, 168, 169

Kai Khusrau, sends Káran with  
 a reply to Shída, iv, 168  
 arms to fight with Shída,  
 iv, 171  
 makes Ruhhám his stand-  
 ard-bearer, iv, 171  
 sends instructions to the  
 host, iv, 171  
 parley of, with Shída, iv,  
 172  
 accepts Shída's challenge  
 to a wrestling-bout, iv,  
 175  
 gives Ruhhám charge of his  
 steed, iv, 175  
 wrestles and overthrows  
 Shída, iv, 175  
 instructs Ruhhám to bury  
 Shída, iv, 176  
 spares the life of Shída's  
 interpreter and bids him  
 return to Afrásiyáb with  
 tidings, iv, 176  
 prays for vengeance on, and  
 attacks, Afrásiyáb, iv, 178  
 bids Shammákh attack, iv,  
 180  
 attacks with Rustam from  
 the centre, iv, 180  
 fights with Ustuklá, Ílá and  
 Burzúyalá, iv, 182  
 returns to camp, iv, 183  
 hears of Afrásiyáb's retreat,  
 iv, 184  
 offers praise to God, iv, 184  
 pursues Afrásiyáb, iv, 185  
*seq.*  
 marches to Sughd, iv, 188  
 hears tidings of Afrásiyáb,  
 iv, 188  
 sends Gustaham, son of  
 Naudar, to Chách, iv, 188  
 Rustam to encounter  
 Tawurg, iv, 188  
 marches from Sughd and  
 reduces the Turkman  
 strongholds, iv, 189  
 to the Gulzaryún, iv, 189  
 commands the centre, iv,  
 191  
 prays for victory, iv, 191

Kai Khusrau, hears of the defeat of Kurákhán by Gustaham, son of Naudar, iv, 193  
 hears of Rustam's defeat of Tawurg, iv, 193  
 warns Rustam to beware of Afrásiyáb, iv, 194  
 plunders the camp of, and pursues, Afrásiyáb, iv, 195  
 besieges Gang-bihisht, iv, 198, 208 *seq.*  
 converses with Rustam, iv, 198, 199, 222  
 receives Jahn in audience, iv, 200  
 declines Afrásiyáb's proposals for peace, iv, 207  
 with Rustam, Gustaham, son of Naudar, and Gúdarz, assails Gang-bihisht on all sides, iv, 208 *seq.*  
 prays for victory, iv, 208  
 takes Gang-bihisht by storm, iv, 209 *seq.*  
 searches vainly for Afrásiyáb, iv, 212  
 gives the spoil of Gang-bihisht to the troops, iv, 217  
 grants quarter to the Turkmans and assumes the government of Túrán, iv, 217  
 dwells for a while at Gang-bihisht, iv, 218  
 leaves Gúdarz and Farhád at Gang-bihisht, iv, 219  
 marches against Afrásiyáb, iv, 220  
 rejects Afrásiyáb's overtures, iv, 223  
 fight a general engagement against Afrásiyáb, iv, 223, 226  
 entrenches his troops and prepares with Tús and Rustam for a night-attack from Afrásiyáb, iv, 224

Kai Khusrau, repulses Afrásiyáb's night-attack, iv, 225  
 defeats Afrásiyáb, iv, 227  
 receives the submission of Afrásiyáb's army, iv, 228  
 gives a feast, iv, 228  
 offers praise to God, iv, 228  
 returns to Gang-bihisht, iv, 228  
 accepts the submission of the Khán and Faghfúr, iv, 229  
 resolves to pursue Afrásiyáb to Gang-dizh, iv, 231  
 plan of, opposed by the host, iv, 231  
 supported by Rustam, iv, 231  
 agreed to by the host, iv, 232  
 sends Gív with Afrásiyáb's captive kindred to Kai Káuś, iv, 232 *seq.*  
 leaves Gustaham, son of Naudar, in command at Gang-bihisht and marches to Chín, iv, 238  
 demands facilities from the Khán, the Faghfúr, and the king of Makrán, iv, 238  
 marches through Khutan, iv, 240  
 welcomed by the Faghfúr and the Khán of Chín, iv, 240  
 stays three months in Chín, iv, 241  
 leaves Rustam in Chín and marches to Makrán, iv, 241  
 sends an embassy to the king of Makrán, iv, 241  
 gives honourable burial to the king of Makrán, iv, 243  
 stops the pillage of Makrán, iv, 243  
 stays a year in Makrán, iv, 244  
 makes ready a fleet, iv, 244

Kai Khusrau, leaves Ashkash as governor and marches to the desert, iv, 244  
 voyage of, iv, 245  
 wonders of, iv, 245  
 lands, iv, 246  
 appoints Giv governor, iv, 246  
 receives the submission of the chiefs, iv, 247  
 seeks for tidings of Gang-dizh and of Afrásiyáb, iv, 247  
 marches to Gang-dizh, iv, 247  
 forbids his troops to injure Gang-dizh, iv, 247  
 enters Gang-dizh, iv, 248  
 searches for Afrásiyáb, iv, 248  
 remains a year at Gang-dizh, iv, 249  
 urged by his paladins to return to Irán, iv, 249  
 appoints a governor for Gang-dizh, iv, 249  
 distributes treasures at Gang-dizh, iv, 250  
 marches seaward from Gang-dizh, iv, 250  
 welcomed by Giv, iv, 250  
 crosses the sea to Makrán, iv, 251  
 welcomed in Makrán by Ashkash and the chiefs, iv, 251  
 appoints a governor for Makrán, iv, 251  
 marches to Chín, iv, 251  
 welcomed by Rustam, iv, 251  
 confirms the Faghfúr and Khán in the possession of Máchin and Chín, iv, 252  
 goes with Rustam to Siyáwushgird, iv, 252  
 rewards Rustam and Giv, iv, 252  
 welcomed by Gustaham, son of Naudar, iv, 252  
 goes to Gang-bihisht, iv, 253

Kai Khusrau, prays for satisfaction on Afrásiyáb, iv, 253  
 dwells for a year in Gang-bihisht, iv, 254  
 desires to return to Kai Káuś, iv, 254  
 leaves Gustaham, son of Naudar, as viceroy, iv, 254  
 carries off treasure from Chín and Makrán, iv, 254  
 arrives at Chách, iv, 255  
 Sughd, iv, 255  
 met by Khúzan and Talí-mán, iv, 255  
 makes offerings to the Fire-temple at Bukhárá, iv, 255  
 crosses the Jíhún, iv, 255  
 arrives at Balkh, iv, 255  
 welcomed everywhere by the people, iv, 255  
 goes by Talíkán, the Marv-rúd, Nishápúr, and Dámaghán to Rai, iv, 255  
 stays two weeks at Rai, iv, 256  
 announces his approach to Kai Káuś, iv, 256  
 goes to Baghdád and thence to Párs, iv, 256  
 reception of, by Kai Káuś, iv, 256  
 presents gifts, and tells his adventures, to Kai Káuś, iv, 257  
 has a feast given in his honour by Kai Káuś, iv, 257  
 rewards the troops, iv, 258  
 takes counsel with Kai Káuś concerning Afrásiyáb, iv, 258  
 goes with Kai Káuś on a pilgrimage to the temple of Azargashasp, iv, 258  
 Kai Káuś and, hear from Gúdarz of Húm's adventure with Afrásiyáb, iv, 264



Kai Khusrau, and Kai Káuś, send  
for Garsiwaz, and put him  
to the torture, iv, 265  
slays Afrásiyáh, iv, 268  
Garsiwaz, iv, 269  
Kai Káuś and, make thank-  
giving before Ázargash-  
asp, iv, 269  
treasurer of, makes gifts to  
Ázargashasp, iv, 269  
sends letters announcing  
his triumph to all the  
chiefs, iv, 270  
holds festival and bestows  
treasure, iv, 270  
goes with Kai Káuś in state  
to the temple of Ázar-  
gashasp, iv, 270  
performs the obsequies of  
Kai Káuś, iv, 271  
assumes the crown as sole  
Sháh, iv, 272  
becomes world-weary, iv,  
272  
closes his court and with-  
draws to his oratory, iv  
274  
prays that he may be taken  
from the world, iv, 274  
passes a week in prayer, iv,  
274, 279  
remonstrated with by the  
nobles, iv, 275, 279  
replies to the nobles, iv, 276  
279  
passes five weeks in prayer,  
iv, 280  
hears from Surúsh that his  
prayer is granted, iv,  
280  
bidden to appoint Luhrásp  
as his successor, iv, 281  
puts off his royal robes, iv,  
281  
receives Zál, Rustam, and  
others in audience, iv, 283  
*seq.*  
pardons Zál, iv, 291  
orders an assembly to be  
held on the plain, iv,  
291

Kai Khusrau, treasure of, dis-  
posal of, iv, 294  
found by Sikandar, 160,  
vi, 176  
charge of, to Gúdarz, iv, 294  
gifts of, to Gív, Zál, and  
Rustam, iv, 295  
Gustahan, iv, 295  
Gúdarz, iv, 295  
Fariburz, iv, 295  
Bízhan, iv, 295  
Zál's companions, iv, 297  
confirms Rustam in pos-  
session of Nímruz, iv, 297;  
v, 203  
bestows Kum and Ispahán  
on Gív, iv, 298  
confirms the charge of  
Káwa's flag, and gives  
Khurásán, to Tús, iv, 300  
summons and crowns Luh-  
rásp, iv, 300  
Zál's protest to, against  
Luhrásp's succession to,  
iv, 301  
justifies his choice of Luh-  
rásp, iv, 301  
takes leave of the Íránians,  
iv, 303  
women of, lament for him,  
iv, 304  
commends his women to the  
honour of Luhrásp, iv, 305  
dismisses the Íránians, iv,  
305  
counsels Luhrásp, iv, 305  
bids Luhrásp farewell, iv,  
306  
sets forth on his pilgrimage  
with some of his chiefs,  
iv, 306  
Indian parallel, iv, 138  
again appealed to by the  
Íránians, iv, 306  
reply of, iv, 307  
bids his chiefs return, iv, 307  
rests with his remaining  
chiefs by a spring, iv, 307  
prepares for his passing, iv,  
308  
farewells his chiefs, iv, 308

- Kai Khusrau, warns his chiefs of the coming of the snow, iv, 308  
disappears, iv, 308
- Kai Kubád, Sháh and founder of the Kaiánian dynasty, 142, i, 42, 373, 374; ii, 3, 8, 12, 14, 16, 18 *seq.*, 26, 33, 34, 36, 37, 87, 143, 144, 249, 260, 270, 274, 327, 336, 363, 390, 394; iii, 34, 49, 51, 57, 144; iv, 35, 70, 149, 168, 201, 283, 298, 302; v, 174, 180, 188, 189, 202, 205, 210, 221, 272; vi, 197, 210; vii, 37, 74, 115, 120, 173; viii, 89, 170, 260, 270, 310, 332; ix, 25  
brought by Rustam from Mount Alburz, i, 382 *seq.*  
tells his dream to Rustam, i, 385  
accepted by Zál and the other chiefs as Sháh, i, 387  
Reign of, 142, ii, 11  
Note on, ii, 11  
origin of, ii, 11 and *note*  
makes peace with Afrá-siyáb, ii, 20  
gifts of, to Zál and Rustam, ii, 21  
descendants of, commanded by Diláfrúz, stationed on Kai Khusrau's left hand, iv, 147
- Kai Manush, vi, 200
- Kai Pashín, son of Kai Kubád, ii, 3, 23, 204, 205; iv, 302
- Kais, Arab chief, entertains Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 250
- Kaiser Friedrich Museum, viii, 192
- Kait. *See* Kaid.
- Kai Ugí, vi, 200
- Kaiwán, Iránian statistician, vii, 11
- Kaiwán, calculates the arrears of taxes, vii, 11
- Kákula, Túránian hero, iv, 188  
reinforces Afrá-siyáb, iv, 188
- Kákwi (*cf.* Karkwi), grandson of Zahhák, 141, i, 226  
attacks the Iránians, i, 225  
defeated and slain by Minú-chihr, i, 227
- Kaláhúr, warrior of Mázandarán, ii, 67  
tries a handgrip with Rustam, ii, 67
- Kalát, stronghold, iii, 39; ix, 91  
home of Farúd, iii, 39  
Kai Khusrau bids Tús to avoid, iii, 39  
Tús marches to, iii, 40  
captured by the Iránians, iii, 66
- Kalát-i-Nádírí, stronghold, ii, 189; iii, 14  
described, iii, 14
- Kalé (Nereis), daughter of Alexander in the Pseudo-Cal-listhenes, vi, 77  
Andreas, the cook, and, legend of, vi, 77
- Kalíla and Dimna, Book of, 169.  
*See* Fables of Bidpai.
- Kálfniyús (Nicephorium, Callinicus, Warigh *q.v.*, Rakka), city situated at the junction of the Belikh and the Euphrates, 167, viii, 188  
taken by Núshírwán, vii, 218, 257
- Kalú, mountain in Túrán, ii, 328<sup>1</sup>  
Pírán sends Kai Khusrau to be brought up on, ii, 328  
goes to see Kai Khusrau at, ii, 329
- Kálús, Rúman chief, iv, 356  
sent as envoy to Ilyás, iv, 352, 358  
Luhrásp, iv, 357  
entertained by Luhrásp, iv, 357

- Kálús, describes Gushtásp to Luhrásp, iv, 358  
dismissed with honour, iv, 359
- Kámús, Túránian hero, 148, 149, iii, 107, 151, 152, 161, 162, 164 *seq.*, 168 *seq.*, 172, 176, 178, 181 *seq.*, 200, 207, 209, 213, 216, 224, 229, 232, 235, 241, 242, 251, 252, 256, 268, 269; iv, 297; v, 167, 199, 220  
Story of, of Kashán, 148, iii, 108 *seq.*  
Firdausí on, iii, 269  
comes to the aid of Pírán, iii, 151  
plan of campaign of, adopted, iii, 162  
leads the attack, iii, 168  
hears of the coming of Rustam, iii, 175  
Rustam described by Pírán to, iii, 183  
challenges Rustam, iii, 187  
parleys with Rustam, iii, 188  
fights, and is taken prisoner by, Rustam, iii, 189  
end of, iii, 190
- Kanábad, mountain, part of the Binalúd range north of Nishápúr in Khurásán.  
The name may be preserved in the modern Gunabad, a village to the north of that range, iv, 23, 37, 47, 48, 51, 55, 56, 76, 88, 112  
occupied by Pírán, iv, 22
- Kand. *See* Kaid.
- Kandá Gashasp, Íránian warrior, viii, 103, 122, 163  
speech of, viii, 166
- Kandahár, city in southern Afghánistán, i, 286; iv, 65; v, 233 *note*
- Kandake (Candace *q.v.*, Kaidáfa *q.v.*), vi, 66
- Kandaros. *See* Kaidrúsh.
- Kandaules. *See* Kaidrúsh.
- Kand-i-Shápúr. *See* Gund-i-Shápúr.
- Kangha (Khárazm *q.v.*), country, ii, 189, 190
- Kangdes (Gang-dizh *q.v.*), stronghold, ii, 189, 190
- Kanír. *See* Tamúsh.
- Kannúj (Kanaúj), city near the west bank of the Ganges in the division of Agra in the United Provinces of British India, i, 261, 357; iii, 35; iv, 278, 283, 284; v, 257; vi, 64, 207, 352; vii, 115, 119, 123, 128, 129, 134, 137, 385, 386, 390, 393, 425  
conquest of, by Mahmúd, i, 99, 100 and *note*, 113  
Sikandar reaches, vi, 110  
river of, vii, 112 and *note*, 390  
monarch of=Shangul, vii, 140  
Bahram Gúr appointed heir to, vii, 143
- Karabagh (Arrán), district north of the Aras, i, 9  
seat of primitive Fire-worship, i, 56
- Karakh-Maishán, town built on the lower Tigris by Ardschír Pápakán, vi, 199, 291 *note*
- Káran, son of Káwa, Íránian hero and the mythical progenitor of a family famous in Ashkánian times, 141, i, 207, 211, 214 *seq.*, 344, 345, 365; ii, 11 *seq.*, 18, 22, 119; iii, 9; iv, 146; vi, 194; viii, 168; ix, 85  
takes the Castle of the Aláns, i, 223 *seq.*  
reports his success to Minú-chihr, i, 225  
commands Naudar's host, i, 345  
tells of his encounter with Afrásiyáb, i, 350  
counsels Naudar, i, 353

- Káran, son of Káwa, with Shídúsh and Kishwád, pursues Kurákhán, i, 354  
 defeats and slays Bármán, i, 354  
 defeats Wísa, i, 357  
 meets and defeats Shamásás, i, 361  
 bears to Zav the news of his election as Sháh, i, 370  
 re-appearance of, in legend, iv, 135, 146  
 made champion of the host, iv 149  
 sent by Kai Khusráu to welcome Shída, iv, 165  
 bears Kai Khusráu's answer to Shída, iv, 168  
 opposes and defeats Jahn, iv, 178  
 family, of, vii, 171  
 glorification of, vii, 170  
 origin of, vii, 185  
 rivalry of, with Míhrán, vii, 185
- Káran, mountain, the name given from the above hero to part of the Alburz range which lies between Mount Damíwand and Ámul and formed his principality, and that of his descendants as late as and after the Muhammadan conquest, v, 112
- Káran, Íránian chief, *temp.* Yazdagird, son of Shápúr and Bahrám Gúr, vi, 394; vii, 86, 90
- Káran, mountain-chief, viii, 189
- Karap (Karpan), v, 17  
 meaning of, v, 14
- Kara su, river, v, 14
- Káraz, viii, 252 and *note*.
- Kargasárs, a wild tribe, i, 253  
 and *note*, 277, 279, 286, 290, 294, 298, 319, 340; ii, 98; iii, 318
- Karímán, Íránian hero and great-grandfather of Rustam, ii, 4, 125 and *note*, v, 202
- Kárístán, viii, 188
- Karkh, suburb of Baghdád, iv, 147, ix, 85  
 Arab defeat at, ix, 85
- Karkh=Khurram Ábád (?), vi, 327
- Karkwí (*cf.* Kákwi), a descendant of Zahhák, i, 290  
 attacks Sám, i, 290  
 slain by Sám, i, 291
- Karmá'il and Irmá'il, Zahhák's cooks, 140  
 device of, i, 146
- Kárnámak - i - Ardshír - i - Pápakán, Pahlaví text, vi, 14 *note*, 61, 198, 301, 325; vii, 380  
 account of, vi, 195  
 resembles Yátkár-i-Zarírán, vi, 196  
 purport of, vi, 196  
 portion of Sháhnáma corresponding with, vi, 196  
 compared with, vi, 200  
*seq.*, 205 *seq.*, 255 *seq.*
- Firdausí and, vi, 196
- polo episode in, vi, 196
- Karnaprívaram* is, vi, 80
- Karpan (Karap *q.v.*), v, 14
- Kársán, viii, 188, 252  
 gates of, shut against Khusráu Parwíz, viii, 252  
 walls of, fall down, viii, 253  
 Khusráu Parwíz stays at, viii, 253
- Karshipta, mythical bird, i, 235
- Karsiyún, Túránian hero, iv, 10
- Kárun, mountain. *See* Káran.
- Kárun, river joining the Shat al Arab at its delta, vi, 199  
*note*  
 dam on, vi, 295
- Kása rúd (Kashaf *q.v.*), river, 147, iii, 28, 68, 69, 71, 72, 82, 105; iv, 90  
 barrícade at the, iii, 29  
 burnt by Gív, iii, 73

- Kashaf (Kása rúd *q. v.*), river in north-eastern Khurásán, i, 235, 296  
 story of the dragon of, i, 296 *seq.*
- Kashán (Kásán, town in Farg-hána, north of the Jaxartes ?), iii, 108, 151, 170, 177, 180, 181, 188, 192, 204, 207, 224, 237, 242; iv, 189; v, 39; vii, 331, 334  
 Kámús of, Story of, 148, iii 108 *seq.*  
 in Túrán, iii, 108  
 in Írán, iii, 109  
 man of = Kámús, iii, 189
- Kashán, city between Ispahán and Kum, iii, 109
- Kashmar. *See* Kishmar.
- Kashmigán, son of Farrukhzád, ix, 92
- Kashmíhan, place north-east of Marv, vii, 89  
 Bahrám Gúr's victory at, vii, 90  
 Súfarai's victory at, vii, 170 *note*, 176
- Kashmír, country, i, 113; ii, 271, 338; iii, 35, 152, 237, 251; iv, 14, 60, 65; v, 263; vii, 395, 396, 421  
 king of, vi, 31  
 monarch of, entertained by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 140 *seq.*
- Kastantaniya (Constantinople), viii, 265
- Kastarít. *See* Kyaxares.
- Kaswín. *See* Kazwín.
- Kát (Káth), one of the two capitals of Khárazm (Gurganj being the other) situated on the right bank of the Oxus, iii, 152
- Katáyún (Náhid), daughter of Cæsar, wife of Gushtásp, and mother of Asfandiyár, 154, 156, ii, 3; iv, 348; v, 11, 253  
 referred to, i, 55; v, 205, 249, 252
- Katáyún, eldest daughter of Cæsar, iv, 348  
 Story of, 154, iv, 329. *seq.*  
 marriage of, iv, 329 *seq.*  
 dreams of Gushtásp, iv, 329  
 sees and chooses Gushtásp for her husband, iv, 330  
 marries Gushtásp, iv, 331  
 sells a jewel, iv, 332  
 discovers that Gushtásp is of royal race, iv, 340  
 persuades Gushtásp to go to the Sports on Cæsar's riding-ground, iv, 349  
 Cæsar reproached by Gushtásp for his unkindness to, iv, 350  
 reconciled to Cæsar, iv, 351  
 referred to, iv, 358  
 receives gifts from Cæsar, iv, 363  
 goes to Írán with Gushtásp, iv, 364  
 sons of, v, 32  
 counsels Asfandiyár, v, 168, 175  
 ancestry of, v, 205  
 Asfandiyár's last message to, v, 249  
 laments over Asfandiyár, v, 252  
 consoled by Bishútan, v, 255
- Katíb, Arab chief, vi, 21, 65, 120
- Katmára, Íránian hero, iv, 92  
 put in command of the right wing, iv, 92
- Káuś, Sháh. *See* Kai Káuś.  
 brand-mark of, iii, 291
- Káuś, son of Sháh Kubád, vii, 316
- Kavárazem (Gurazm *q. v.*), v, 12
- Kavi (Kai), ii, 8  
 Usa, ii, 25
- Kavi (Kavíg), v, 14
- Kavíg (Kavi), v, 17  
 meaning of, v, 14
- Kavi Husravah (Kai Khusrau *q. v.*), iv, 137, 138
- Kávya Ushaná (Kai Káuś, *q. v.*) ii, 25
- Kávyan (Kaian), ii, 8

- Káwa, the smith, 140, i, 155 *seq.*, 207, 214; iv, 165, 178; vii, 185; viii, 72; ix, 30  
Zahhák and, Story of, 140, i, 154 *seq.*  
revolts and goes to Farídún, i, 157  
leads Farídún's van, i, 160  
flag of, i, 143, 160, 211, 217, 218, 237, 332; ii, 12, 227, 341, 349, 354, 400, 402, 405, 406, 410; iii, 25, 38, 39, 48, 84, 85, 116, 121, 126, 129, 135 *seq.*, 149, 161; iv, 24, 25, 34, 55, 59, 92, 112, 146, 180, 226, 243, 282, 292, 359; vi, 347; vii, 250; viii, 385; ix, 30, 67  
origin of, i, 157  
Bízhan's prowess with, iii, 93  
half of, taken by Pírán, iii, 94  
staff of, cloven by Púlád-wand, iii, 258  
Tús confirmed in charge of, by Kai Khusrau, iv, 300  
rescued by Girámí, v, 59, 69  
Káwian, standard, i, 211  
Kázirún, town west of Shíráz, vi, 199  
Kazwín, city north-west of Tih-rán, v, 30  
Kerátor. *See* Tainúsh.  
Keresásp, Keresáspa, Íránian hero, i, 234, 235, 373; ii, 4  
account of, in the Zanda-vasta, i, 172  
later development of, i, 174  
Keresavasda (Garsíwaz *q.v.*), ii, 189; iv, 137  
Khalaj (Kharlíkh), a Turkish tribe dwelling north of the Jaxartes and east of Táshkand, vii, 92  
Khálid, famous Arab general  
*temp.* Muhammad, v, 12  
begins hostilities against Persian Empire, ix, 66  
Khálid, recalled to lead Syrian campaign, iv, 66  
Khallukh (*cf.* Khalaj), iv, 156; v, 42, 44, 55, 61, 74, 90, 107, 112, 157, 242, 255  
Khán of Chín, the, *temp.* Kai Káuís, ii, 383  
*temp.* Kai Khusrau, 148, 149, iii, 108, 160 *seq.*, 164 *seq.*, 172, 175 *seq.*, 181, 184, 187, 190 *seq.*, 196, 198 *seq.*, 205, 207 *seq.*, 215, 217, 221, 222, 226 *seq.*, 235, 241, 242, 251, 252, 256, 268, 320; iv, 60, 135, 238 *seq.*; v, 199, 220  
Khán of Chín = Arjásp, v, 47, 51, 72  
*temp.* Sikandar, ambassadors from, come to Dárá, vi, 35  
*temp.* Bahrám Gúr, 165, vii, 49, 91, 93, 97, 101, 111  
invades Írán, vii, 84  
responds graciously to the Íránians' embassy, vii, 88  
gives himself up to pleasure at Marv, vii, 88  
fate of, in war with Bahrám Gúr, vii, 5, 90  
crown of, placed in a fire-temple, vii, 95  
Khúshnawáz, son of, vii, 165  
*temp.* Núshírwán, 168, vii, 186, 328 *seq.*; viii, 43, 52, 87, 89, 97 *seq.*  
daughter of, married to Núshírwán, 168, vii, 213, 357  
historically ruler of the Turks, vii, 317  
relations of, with Núshírwán, vii, 88  
the Haitálíans, vii, 317, 328 *seq.*  
embassy of, to Núshírwán, vii, 329  
hears of the destruction of his embassy by the Haitálíans, vii, 330

Khán of Chín, leads forth his troops, vii, 330  
 defeats the Hartálans, vii, 332  
 Núshírwán takes counsel about, vii, 333, 334  
 descent of, from Afrásiyáb and Arjásp, vii, 334.  
 Núshírwán writes to, vii, 337  
 purposes to invade Írán, vii, 337  
 hears of Núshírwán's advance, vii, 338  
 takes counsel, vii, 338  
 sends embassy to Núshírwán, vii, 339  
 hears his envoy's account of Núshírwán, vii, 344  
 offers to make affinity with Núshírwán, vii, 345  
 attempts to outwit Núshírwán, vii, 351  
 gives audience to Míhrán Sitád, vii, 351  
 invites Míhrán Sitád to choose a wife for Núshírwán, vii, 352  
 consults the astrologers, vii, 354  
 entrusts his daughter to Míhrán Sitád, vii, 354  
 gives presents to Míhrán Sitád, vii, 356  
 parts with his daughter at the Jíhún, vii, 356  
 daughter of, 168  
 described, vii, 352, 357  
 evacuates territory, vii, 358  
 Khán of Chín (*see too* Parmúda), *temp.* Hurmuzd, Khusrau Parwíz, and Yazdagird, 171, 173, viii, 141 *seq.*, 190, 191, 204, 215, 220, 263 *seq.*, 306, 316 *seq.*, 342 *seq.*, 346 *seq.*, 351, 352, 356, 357, 363; ix, 87, 102  
 supposed war of, with Hurmuzd, viii, 72

Khán of Chín, marriage of daughter of, with Núshírwán referred to, viii, 72  
 letter of, viii, 77  
 dismissed by Hurmuzd with gifts, viii, 152  
 refuses advances of Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 153  
 becomes friends with Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 172  
 brother of, 173, viii, 190, 191  
 reports flight of Gurdya, viii, 351  
 ordered to go in pursuit, viii, 351  
 parley of, with Gurdya, viii, 352  
 daughter of, viii, 190  
 killed by lion-ape, 173, viii, 322, 324  
 queen of, viii, 190  
 asks Bahrám Chúbína to avenge her daughter, viii, 324  
 disgraced, viii, 344  
 welcomes Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 316  
 swears friendship with Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 317  
 dominated by Makátúra, viii, 317  
 advised by Bahrám Chúbína to slight Makátúra, viii, 318  
 views fight between Bahrám Chúbína and Makátúra, viii, 320  
 sends gifts to Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 321  
 refuses to give up Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 329  
 distrust Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 334  
 impress of seal of, obtained by Kharrád, viii, 338  
 burns Kulún's kindred, viii, 334  
 seeks in vain for Kharrád, viii, 344  
 mourns for Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 344

- Khán of Chín, brother of, 173  
 = Bízhan, ix, 97
- Khánagí, Rúman noble, viii, 375, 378  
 leads Cæsar's embassy to Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 374  
 Khusrau Parwíz' gifts to, viii, 382  
 returns to Rúm, viii, 382
- Khán-i-Irmán (Arman *q.v.*), iii, 290
- Khanjast (Chíjast, Urumiah), lake in Ázarbáiján, iv, 136, 264; viii, 282
- Khár (Khuvár) of Rai, district and town (now Aradún), so called to distinguish it from a town of the same name in Párs, situated south-east of Tihrán, i, 368, 374, 381
- Khárazm (Khiva), country, ii, 189, 190; iv, 11, 12, 15, 60, 61, 72, 157, 173, 186, 287; vi, 72; vii, 238, 359
- Kharazmians, people, ii, 190; vi, 72
- Kharijites, Muhammadan sect, i, 13
- Kharrád, Íránian hero, i, 365; ii, 11, 22, 33, 73, 340; iii, 115, 127, 139, 211, 273, 289; iv, 15
- Kharrád, nonce name assumed by Asfandiyár, v, 146, 149
- Kharrád, *temp.* Ardshír Pápa-kán, Íránian warrior, 161, vi, 284  
 takes Ardawán prisoner, vi, 228  
*temp.* Bahrám Gúr, Íránian chief, vii, 85  
*temp.* Kubád son of Pírúz, archimage, vii, 207  
*temp.* Núshírwán=(?) the above, vii, 251
- Kharrád, sacred Fire, vi, 212 and *note*, 226, 391
- Kharrád, bower of, vii, 83
- Kharrád, son of Barzín (Hurmuzd Garábzín or Galábzín), 171-173, viii, 74, 76, 158 *seq.*, 205, 225, 257 *seq.*, 269, 270, 331 *seq.*, 381; ix, 4, 11, 12, 24  
 sent by Hurmuzd as envoy to Sáwa, viii, 110  
 beguiles Sáwa and flees, viii, 111  
 flight of, reported to Sáwa, viii, 112  
 counsels Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 121  
 seeks, refuge, viii, 123  
 counts Íránian slain, viii, 127  
 blames and counsels Bahrám Chúbína for his behaviour to Parmúda, viii, 144, 146  
 questions Bahrám Chúbína on his adventure with the onager, viii, 158  
 flees from Balkh with arch-scribe, viii, 159  
 makes report of Bahrám Chúbína to Hurmuzd, viii, 160  
 real name of, viii, 190  
 waits on Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 252  
 speech of, to Cæsar, viii, 259, 275  
 masters Cæsar's talismans, viii, 274, 275  
 Cæsar's gift to, viii, 278  
 praised by Cæsar, viii, 279  
 made chief minister, viii, 314  
 speech of, to Khán, viii, 332  
 attempts to prejudice Bahrám Chúbína to the Khán, viii, 333  
 intrigues against Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 334 *seq.*  
 cures daughter of queen of Chín, viii, 336  
 incites Kulún to kill Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 337  
 asks boon of queen of Chín, viii, 338



- Kharrád, returns to Írán and is rewarded, viii, 345  
 reads out Cæsar's letter to Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 376  
 end of, ix, 4  
 chosen to visit Khusrau Parwíz at Taisafún, ix, 9  
 Ashtád and, parley with Galínúsh, ix, 11  
 visit Khusrau Parwíz, ix, 12  
 report to Shírwí, ix, 27
- Kharrád, Íránian general, defeats Khazars, viii, 96
- Kharrád, father of Hurmuzd, ix, 102
- Khashásh, Túránian hero, v, 47  
 made leader of the van, v, 46
- Khatá (Cathay), northern China, ii, 357
- Khatlán (Khuttal), a general name for the non-Muhammadan regions to the north and east of Khurásán (=Haitál), more specifically a district on the right bank of the upper Oxus west of, or forming part of, Badakhshán, iii, 218, 228; iv, 65; vii, 94, 331, 359
- Khátún, consort of the Khán of Chín, vii, 5  
 fate of, in war with Bahráam Gúr, vii, 5
- Kháwar, the West or Khurásán (?), perhaps=Khár *q.v.*, iv, 147, 148. *Cf.* Káran (mountain).
- Khazar, Khazars, region and people north of the Caucasus, i, 17; ii, 285; iv, 71, 316, 352 *seq.*, 358, 361; vii, 83, 214, 224; viii, 94, 377, 379  
 invasion of, viii, 72, 93  
 defeated, viii, 96
- Khazarwán, Túránian hero, 142  
 Shamásás and, invade Zábulistán, i, 345, 358
- Khazarwán parleyed with by Míhráb to gain time, i, 358  
 slain by Zál, i, 360; ii, 18
- Khazarwán, *temp.* Bahráam Gúr, king of Gilán, vii, 85  
 takes the Khán prisoner, vii, 90
- Khazarwán, Íránian noble, *temp.* Khusrau Parwíz, speech of, viii, 241
- Khazrá, treasure, viii, 406 and *note*
- Khiláfat, the, i, 12 *seq.*
- Khil'at, robe of honour, i, 82
- Khír, place on the south-western shore of Lake Niris in Párs, vi, 198
- Khizr (Al Khidr, *q.v.*), chief and prophet, vi, 159  
 goes with Sikandar to the Gloom, vi, 159  
 parts company with Sikan-dar, vi, 160  
 finds the Fount of Life, vi, 160
- Khiva (Kharazm), country, ii, 190
- Khorasan. *See* Khurásán.
- Khshathró-saoka (Gang-dizh ?), stronghold, ii, 189, 190
- Khudai-náma (Bástán-Náma), i, 66; v, 24
- Khurásán, province in north-eastern Írán, 176, ii, 399; iv, 148, 203; v, 28, 77; vi, 242, 301; vii, 100, 214, 224, 237, 335; viii, 78, 94, 241, 313, 355, 369; ix, 59, 69, 87, 88, 92
- Narsí made ruler of, vii, 99  
 governor of, viii, 75  
 prince of, viii, 173  
 Máhwí becomes master of, ix, 114
- Khurásán, chieftain, viii, 241  
 speech of, viii, 240
- Khurásání. *See* Mákh.
- Khurdád, ameshaspenta, i, 88; iii, 287, 328

- Khurdád, month and day, i, 88,  
159; vii, 112, 225, 351;  
viii, 25, 173
- Khurm, seat of an oracle, vi, 82  
meaning of, vi, 82  
oracle of, consulted, vi, 184
- Khurra-i-Ardshír. *See* Ardshír  
Khurra.
- Khurram Ábád (Karkh?), city,  
vi, 327, 357 and *note*
- Khurshíd, genius and day, i, 88;  
v, 92 *note*
- Khurshíd, Iránian chief, viii,  
270, 296
- Khúshnawáz, ruler of the Haitá-  
lians, 166, vii, 194, 198,  
359; viii, 75, 168, 242,  
245, 267
- Pírúz advances against, vii,  
164
- writes to Pírúz, vii, 165
- appeals to Bahrám Gúr's  
treaty, vii, 166
- prayer of, to God, vii, 167
- digs a trench, vii, 67
- defeats Pírúz by a feint, vii,  
168
- correspondence of, with  
Súfarai, vii, 174 *seq.*
- defeated by Súfarai, vii,  
177
- takes refuge in Kuhandizh,  
vii, 177
- sues for peace, vii, 178
- releases Kubád, Ardshír, and  
other captives, and gives  
up the spoil, vii, 180
- Khusrau, Sháh. *See* Kai Khus-  
rau.
- Khusrau, Iránian noble, 163,  
164, vi, 408
- elected Sháh in succession  
to Yazdagird son of Shá-  
púr, vi, 395; vii, 11
- proposes that Bahrám Gúr  
shall begin the ordeal, vi,  
409
- does homage to Bahrám Gúr,  
vi, 410
- honoured by Bahrám Gúr,  
vii, 10
- Khusrau, father of Khazarwán,  
viii, 241, 296 (?)
- Khusrau Parwíz, son of Hur-  
muzd, Sháh, 171-175, v,  
294, 306 *note*; vi, 3; viii,  
71, 74, 170, 173, 174, 181,  
182, 191 *seq.*, 216, 304,  
306, 316, 334, 335, 342,  
358, 367 *seq.*, 395 *note*,  
413 *note*; ix, 4 *seq.*, 11,  
12, 25, 26 *note*, 30, 31, 33  
*seq.*, 38 *seq.*, 45 *seq.*
- horse of, story of, viii, 91
- Hurmuzd plots to kill, viii,  
174
- flees, viii, 175
- adherents gather round,  
viii, 175
- swear fealty to, viii, 176
- goes to Baghdád, viii, 184
- visits Hurmuzd in prison,  
viii, 185, 198, 230
- extensive historical con-  
quests of, viii, 187
- materials for reign of, in  
Sháhnáma, viii, 187
- flight of, historical, from  
Ctesiphon, viii, 188
- affects Christianity in exile,  
viii, 188
- helped on terms by Emperor  
Maurice, viii, 188
- historical campaign of,  
against Bahrám Chúbina,  
viii, 189
- visits of, to Fire-temple at  
Shíz, viii, 190, 283, 307,  
312
- Nu'man bin Munzír exe-  
cuted by, viii, 190
- triumphal arch of, viii,  
192
- Assurbanipal and, reigns of,  
compared, viii, 193
- fall of, historical account of,  
viii, 193 *seq.*
- attempts of Heraclius to  
make peace with, viii, 194,  
195
- treatment of defeated gen-  
erals by, viii, 194

Khusrau Parwíz, prediction concerning, viii, 194  
 Reign of, 196, viii, 186 *seq.*  
 Note on, viii, 186 *seq.*  
 Hurmuzd's requests to, viii, 199  
 spies' report of Bahrám Chúbína to, viii, 201  
 takes counsel, viii, 202  
 marches to meet Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 203  
 interview of, with Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 204 *seq.*  
 attacked by Turk and saved by Gustaham, viii, 220  
 dissuaded from making a night-attack, viii, 224  
 troops of, tampered with by Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 226  
 sends away his baggage, viii, 228  
 combat of, with Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 228, 229  
 retreats to, and holds, the bridge of Nahrawán, viii, 228  
 worsts Yalán-sína, viii, 229  
 flees to Taisafún, viii, 229  
 counselled by Hurmuzd, viii, 230  
 prepares to flee, viii, 231  
 takes refuge in a shrine, viii, 233  
 arrives at Bábil, viii, 249  
 entertained by Kais, viii, 250  
 Mihrán Sitád, viii, 251  
 town of Kársán and, viii, 252  
 interview of, with Hermit, viii, 254  
 warned against Gustaham, viii, 255, 256  
 welcomed by Cæsar, viii, 257  
 takes up his abode at Warígh, viii, 257  
 instructs his embassy to Cæsar, viii, 257  
 Cæsar offers daughter to, viii, 266

Khusrau Parwíz, accepts Cæsar's offer, viii, 269, 270  
 welcomes Niyátús and Maryam, viii, 280  
 marches to Dúk, viii, 282  
 Mausíl and, viii, 283  
 returns to Dúk, viii, 284  
 Dará Panáh goes over to, viii, 286  
 forges letter to Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 286  
 sends corpse of Kút to Cæsar, viii, 291  
 decides to fight without Rúman help, viii, 292, 293  
 arrays his host, viii, 293  
 resolves to fight in person, viii, 295  
 bodyguard of, viii, 296  
 leaves Bahrám in charge of host, viii, 296  
 flees from Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 298  
 saved by Surúsh, viii, 299  
 returns to Niyátús and Maryam, viii, 299  
 suspected of Christian tendencies, viii, 308  
 gives banquet to Niyátús and Rúmans, viii, 309  
 restores captured cities to Rúm, viii, 312  
 makes Kharrád, son of Barzín, chief minister, viii, 314  
 proclamation of, viii, 314  
 demands extradition of Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 328  
 advised to send envoy to Khán, viii, 329  
 resolves to put Bandwí to death, viii, 354  
 summons Gustaham, viii, 355  
 hears of Gurdya's doings, viii, 356, 358  
 writes to Gurdya viii, 359  
 hears of the death of Gustaham, viii, 362  
 welcomes Gurdya to court, viii, 362

Khusrau Parwíz, Gurdya dresses  
   up to please, viii, 363  
   warned by Shírin against  
   Gurdya, viii, 364  
   makes Gurdya overseer of  
   royal bower, viii, 364  
   oppresses Rai, viii, 365  
   relieves Rai, viii, 368  
   organizes the realm, viii, 369  
   *seq.*  
   puts to death adherents of  
   Bandwí and Gustaham,  
   viii, 370  
   consults astrologers on birth  
   of Shírwí, viii, 372  
   grieved at Shírwí's horo-  
   scope, viii, 372  
   consults the high priest,  
   viii, 372  
   writes to Cæsar, viii, 373  
   Cæsar's embassy to, viii,  
   374  
   gives Cæsar's gifts to Shírwí,  
   viii, 381  
   presents to Khánagí, viii,  
   382  
   and Shírin, ix, 7  
   Story of, 174, viii, 382 *seq.*  
   equipage of, for the chase,  
   viii, 384  
   married to Shírin, viii, 386  
   justifies his marriage, viii,  
   388  
   gives gilded chamber to  
   Shírin, viii, 389  
   displeased with Shírwí,  
   viii, 390  
   and throne of Tákdis, viii,  
   391 *seq.*  
   palace of, story of, viii, 400  
   *seq.*  
   Farghán and, viii, 401 *seq.*  
   imprisons Rúman artificers,  
   viii, 402  
   releases Rúman artificers,  
   viii, 403  
   treasures of, viii, 406  
   Guráz intrigues against, viii,  
   408  
   device of, against Guráz and  
   Cæsar, viii, 409

Khusrau Parwíz, sends Farrukh-  
   zád to the host, viii,  
   412  
   hears Kubád proclaimed  
   Sháh, viii, 416  
   arms and hides in garden,  
   viii, 417  
   palace of, plundered, viii,  
   418  
   discovered, viii, 419  
   holds talk with Farrukhzád,  
   viii, 420  
   recalls former presage, viii,  
   420  
   imprisoned, viii, 421  
   duration of reign of, viii,  
   421  
   charges against, ix, 4, 5, 9,  
   10  
   reply of, to charges, ix, 5,  
   14 *seq.*  
   Haram of, ix, 4, 5  
   last days of, Theophanes'  
   account of, ix, 6  
   Shírwí's treatment of, ix, 7  
   sons of, executed, ix, 7, 35  
   imprisoned at Taisafún, ix,  
   9  
   companions by Shírin, ix,  
   29  
   Bárbad visits, ix, 29  
   laments over, ix, 30  
   steed of, ix, 30  
   son of, ix, 31  
   referred to, ix, 33 and *note*  
   kingdom of Híra abolished  
   by, ix, 66  
   Muhammad's letter to, ix,  
   66  
 Khusrau and Shírin, Persian  
   poem, viii, 192  
 Khusrau, father of Pírúz, 175,  
   vii, 44, 46, 48, 49, 51, 57  
 Khusrau, a miller, 176, ix, 99.  
   *See* Miller.  
 Khutan, town and district in  
   eastern Turkistán, 146,  
   150, ii, 277, 288, 325, 357,  
   383; iii, 107, 242, 247;  
   iv, 26, 219; vii, 84, 115,  
   330, 334, 359

- Khutan, raided by Giv, iii, 247  
 monarch of, iv, 11  
 Afrásiyáb, iv, 230  
 Kai Khusrau marches  
 through, iv, 240  
 people of, make submission  
 to Núshírwán, vu, 360  
 Khuzá' Arab tribe, vi, 65  
 rule of, ended by Sikandar,  
 vi, 120  
 Khúzán, a king of Párs, iv, 146,  
 191  
 meets Kai Khusrau in  
 Sughd, iv, 255  
 Khúzians, people of Khúzistán,  
*q.v.*, iv, 146  
 Khúzistán (Susiana, 'Arabistán'),  
 province at the head of  
 the Persian Gulf, vi, 290  
 and *note*, 298, 327, 357;  
 viii, 109 and *note*, 193  
 annexed by Arabs, ix, 68  
 Khuzrá, treasure, ix, 20  
 Khvaitúk-das, i, 60  
 Catullus on, i, 60  
 Khyóns (Hvyaonas), v, 13, 25  
 Kibchák, region east of the Jax-  
 ates and north of Tásh-  
 kand, iv, 254; ix, 93  
 Kibtís, vi, 397 and *note*  
 Kímák, a river in Kibchák, iv,  
 203, 231  
 Kimmerians, the, i, 17  
 Kinám-i-Asírán, near to, or iden-  
 tical with, the ruins of  
 Shús (Sús, Susa), vi, 327,  
 357 and *note*  
 King, the ideal, iii, 16  
 of kings, title of, vi, 193, 197  
 meaning of, in Achae-  
 menian and Parthian  
 times, vi, 198  
 assumed by Ardshír Pápa-  
 kán, vi, 193, 199, 254,  
 258, 273  
 of the Commons, vii, 3  
 piece in chess, vii, 382, 385  
 position of, vii, 388, 422  
 check to, vii, 422  
 mate to, vii, 423  
 piece in nard, vii, 382, 389  
 Kings, Book of, Firdausí's, i, 43  
 Persian, viii, 73  
 Tribal *See* Tribal.  
 Kirmán, region in southern Írán,  
 158, iv, 146; vi, 31, 47,  
 57, 59, 199, 202, 205, 245,  
 252; vii, 214; viii, 313  
 Dára retires to, vi, 46  
 etymology of, vi, 204, 236  
 Ardshír Pápakán's invasion  
 of, vi, 205, 245  
 Kirmánsháh, title, vi, 313, 368  
 Kirmánsháh, city between Bagh-  
 dád and Hamadán, vii,  
 187; viii, 192  
 Kirmánsháhn, city in Kirmán,  
 south of Yazd, vi, 368  
 Kírwán (Karwán, district north  
 of Jaxartes?), ix, 93  
 Kírwí, Íránian noble, vii, 23  
 story of, vii, 22  
 Kishmar, place south of Nishá-  
 púr in the Kuhistán dis-  
 trict of Khurásán, v, 35  
 Cypress of, v, 27  
 account of, v, 28, 34  
 Gushtásp and, v, 34  
 Kishwád, Íránian hero, father  
 of Gúdarz, 151, i, 207,  
 344, 365; ii, 4, 11, 12,  
 18, 22, 33, 70, 73, 107, 112,  
 138, 318, 384, 399, 404,  
 409; iii, 19, 24, 33, 45,  
 100, 121, 123, 126, 143,  
 154, 187, 215, 289, 302,  
 305, 308, 311, 327, 339;  
 iv, 20, 32, 35, 63, 147,  
 174, 180, 263, 294, 310,  
 360, viii, 104  
 Káran, Shídúsh, and, pursue  
 Kurúkhán, i, 354  
 sent by Zál to release the  
 Íránian captives, i, 367  
 Kishwaristán, Íránian hero, iv,  
 148  
 commands the troops from  
 Barbaristán and Rúm, iv,  
 148  
 Kisrá, Sháh, 166. *See* Núshír-  
 wán.  
 Kitradád, Nask, i, 373

- Knathaiti, Pairika, female personification of idolatry, i, 172
- Kobad, Sháh. *See* Kubád.
- Ktesias, Greek historian (5th century B.C.), vi, 13, 68
- legend of Cyrus in, ii, 9; vi, 195
- Gutschmid on, vi, 195
- account of Semiramis in, v, 293
- Persica* of, v, 293
- Kubád, Íránian hero, brother of Káran, 172, i, 207
- acts as Minúchíhr's scout, i, 217
- parleys with Túr, i, 217
- accepts Bárman's challenge to single combat, i, 347
- dissuaded by Káran, i, 347
- reply of, i, 347
- fight and is slain, i, 348
- Kubád, Sháh. *See* Kai Kubád.
- Kubád, son of Pírúz and father of Núshírwán, Sháh (Kobad), 166, vi, 3, 208; vii, 179 *seq.* and *note*, 226, 247; viii, 25, 46, 72, 168, 169, 245, 265, 285, 312, 369; ix, 22, 25
- captivity of, among the Haitálíans, vii, 160
- leads the rearguard in the war with the Turkmans (Haitálíans), vii, 164
- taken prisoner, vii, 168
- released, vii, 180
- made Sháh instead of Balásh, vii, 182, 188
- Reign of, 166, vii, 183 *seq.*
- Note on, vii, 183 *seq.*
- historical sketch of, vii, 183
- title of, viii, 183 and *note*
- reform of taxation by, vii, 183 *note*, 215
- with the help of Shápúr of Rai overthrows and puts Súfarai to death, vii, 191 *seq.*
- dethroned, vii, 184, 195
- Kubád, imprisoned, vii, 184
- escapes, vii, 184, 197
- marriage of, vii, 184, 186, 198
- gives his wife a signet-ring, vii, 198
- cedes Chaghán to the Haitálíans in return for their help, vii, 198
- goes to Ahwáz, vii, 198
- hears of the birth of Núshírwán, vii, 199
- marches on Taisafún, vii, 199
- pardons the Íránians and Jámásp, vii, 200
- makes Rizmíhr chief minister, vii, 200
- wars of, with Rúm, vii, 187, 200
- takes cities from Rúm, vii, 200
- makes his capital at Madá'in, vii, 201
- builds a city and hospital, vii, 201
- drought in reign of, vii, 201
- Mazdak and, vii, 184, 201 *seq.*
- Mazdak's parable to, vii, 201
- converted by Mazdak, vii, 184, 204
- presides over the disputation between Núshírwán and Mazdak, vii, 207
- gives judgment against Mazdak, vii, 208
- hands over Mazdak and his followers to Núshírwán, vii, 208
- repentance of, vii, 209
- testament of, vii, 210, 316
- age of, vii, 210
- death of, vii, 210
- sons of, vii, 316
- Kubád (Shírwí q.v.), son of Khusrau Parwíz and Maryam, Sháh, 175, viii, 190, 196; ix, 3 *seq.*, 9, 11, 12, 14, 24, 32, 47, 64

- Kubád (Shírwí), secret and public names of, viii, 371, 416  
 proclaimed Sháh, viii, 416  
 imprisons Khusráu Parwíz, viii, 421  
 accedes to throne, viii, 421  
 Reign of, 175, ix, 3  
 Note on, ix, 3  
 tragic, ix, 3  
 pestilence during, ix, 3  
 boorishness of, ix, 3  
 difficult situation of, ix, 3  
 reproached by his sisters, ix, 7
- Kubád, son of Jam son of Kubád, vii, 316  
 plot to make, Sháh, vii, 316
- Kubard, Túránian hero, iv, 190  
 commands the left, iv, 190
- Kúch, tribe or town (Kúk ?) in Kirmán, ii, 226
- Kúfa, city west of the Euphrates and in the neighbourhood of Mashad 'Alí (Nedjef), viii, 190; ix, 68, 69  
 wood of, vi, 381  
 founded by Sa'ad, ix, 67
- Kúh, nonce name assumed by Húmán, iii, 198
- Kuhandízh (Baigand *q.v.*), vii, 177  
 Khúshnawáz takes refuge in, vii, 177
- Kuhíla, Túránian hero, iv, 181  
 slain by Minúchihr, iv, 181
- Kuhistán, generally a mountainous region, particularly that of northern Írán, Parthia, or of the high ranges further south, but in the Sháhnáma=Má wara'u'n-Nahr (Transoxania), ii, 199
- Kuhram, Túránian hero, 151, ii, 349  
 chosen to fight with Barta, iv, 97; v, 29  
 slain by Barta, iv, 105
- Kuhram, brother or son of Arjás, 156, v, 29, 58, 89  
*seq.*, 106 *seq.*, 112, 141, 159
- Kuhram, commands one wing of the host, v, 46  
 in chuef, v, 56  
 sent by Arjás to attack Balkh, v, 90  
 troops of, storm Balkh, burn the Fire-temple, and slay Zarduhsht and the priests, v, 92  
 stationed on the left, v, 95  
 mortally wounds Farshíward, v, 95  
 appointed by Arjás to send away the spoil of Balkh in the charge of his younger brothers, v, 108  
 commands the right, v, 110  
 defeated by Astandiyár, v, 110  
 bidden to prepare for war, v, 151  
 retreats to the Brazen Hold, v, 152  
 mistakes Bishútan for Asfandiyár, v, 152  
 hears the cries of the Íránian watch from the Brazen Hold and takes counsel with Andarimán, v, 155  
 makes for the Brazen Hold with his troops, v, 156  
 pursued by Asfandiyár, v, 156  
 encountered and taken prisoner by Asfandiyár, v, 157  
 executed, v, 158 and *note*
- Kujarán, city and province on the Persian Gulf, vi, 205, 206, 232  
 Haftwád migrates from, to stronghold, vi, 235
- Kulbád, Túránian hero, brother of Pírán, 146, 151, i, 92, 342; ii, 18, 264, 388; iii, 166, 177, 198, 199, 205, 210, 222, 231, 234, 252; iv, 10, 26  
 wounded by Zál, i, 361  
 death and revival of, in legend, ii, 119

- Kulbád, pursues Kai Khusrau, ii, 377 *seq.*  
 chosen to fight with Fariburz, iv, 97  
 slain by Fariburz, iv, 99
- Kulún, Túránian hero, i, 382, 387  
 sent by Afrásiyáb to intercept Rustam, i, 383  
 slain by Rustam, i, 386
- Kulún, Turk in league with Kharrád against Bahrám Chúbína, 173, viii, 335  
 incited by Kharrád to kill Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 337  
 arrives at Marv by help of Khán's seal, viii, 339  
 seeks interview with Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 339  
 stabs Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 340  
 maltreated, viii, 340  
 kindred of, burnt, viii, 344
- Kum, city in 'Irák 'Ajamí, between Tihrán and Káshán, ii, 399  
 bestowed on Giv by Kai Káuś, ii, 399  
 Kai Khusrau, iv, 298
- Kumár, city or cape in India, ii, 103 and *note*
- Kundrav, minister of Zalhák, 140  
 mythological origin of, i, 143  
 Farídún and, Story of, 140, i, 164  
 goes to Zalhák with tidings of Farídún, i, 165
- Kundur, Túránian hero, iii, 152, 185, 210, 215, 251; v, 112,  
 worsted by Rustam, iii, 224  
 stationed on the right, v, 94
- Kunduz (Kuhandizh, Baigand *q.v.*), iv, 151  
 Afrásiyáb encamps at, iv, 151  
 marches from, iv, 154
- Kur (Cyrus), river in Transcaucasia flowing into the Caspian sea, v, 13
- Kuraish, Arab tribe, vi, 65
- Kurákhán, son of Afrásiyáb, i, 92; iv, 10  
 counsels Afrásiyáb, iii, 301  
 summoned and sent with troops to Bukhárá by Afrásiyáb, iv, 154  
 joined by Afrásiyáb, iv, 186  
 defeated by Gustaham son of Naudar, iv, 193  
 defeat of, announced to Afrásiyáb, iv, 194
- Kurákhán, governor of Balkh, viii, 22
- Kurán, vi, 65; viii, 277 *note*; ix, 81 and *note*  
 quoted, i, 99; v, 166; viii, 42, 192; ix, 81 and *note*  
 references to Alexander the Great in, vi, 15, 78, 84  
 legend of Moses and the salt fish in, vi, 77  
 Gog and Magog in, vi, 78
- Kurd, Kurds, the people of Kurdistán *q.v.*, 161, i, 9; vi, 193, 203, 257  
 language, i, 64  
 legend of the origin of the, i, 146  
 Ardshír Pápakán's war with, in Kárnámak, vi, 196, 206, 256  
 Sháhnáma, vi, 230 *seq.*
- Kurdistán, mountainous region north of Mesopotamia, vi, 330
- Kurdzád, daughter of Mihrak *q.v.*
- Kuria Muria Islands, off the southern coast of Arabia, vi, 72
- Kurúkhán, Túránian warrior, i, 353  
 sent by Afrásiyáb to attack Párs, i, 353
- Kurus, Indian tribal race, iv, 388
- Kús, i, 177. *See* Tammísha.
- Kút, Rúman warrior, 172, viii, 281, 289, 291  
 slain by Bahrám Chúbína viii, 290



Kút, corpse of, sent back to Rûmans, viii, 291  
 Kutch (*read Kûch q.v.*), iii, 34  
 Kutîb, father of Husain (or Ha'iy) one of Firdausi's patrons, i, 35; ix, 121  
 Kyaxares (Kastarit), king or chief and leader in the confederacy that overthrew Nineveh, i, 18

## L

- Labarum, the, v, 306 *note*  
 Lâdan (Pashan), battle of, iii, 13 *seq.*, 80 *seq.*, 89 *seq.*, 123; iv, 27, 37, 90, 120, 299  
 Lagus, Ptolemy son of. *See* Ptolemy.  
 Lahhâk, Tûrânian hero, brother of Pîrân, 152, i, 92; ii, 323 *note*; iii, 90, 166, 198; iv, 7, 71, 122, 125, 133, 160, 162  
     summons Pîrân to save Farangîs, ii, 322  
     pursues the Íránians to Mount Hamáwan, iii, 135  
     commands with Farshîdward the right wing, iv, 26  
     attacks the Íránians in flank, iv, 82  
     opposed by Gurgîn, iv, 83  
     goes to help Pîrân and attacks Gîv, iv, 85  
     prowess of, iv, 86  
     put in chief command with Farshîdward, iv, 94  
     Pîrân's instructions to, iv, 95  
     Farshîdward and, hear of the death of Pîrân and the coming of Kai Khusrâu, iv, 112  
     lament for Pîrân, iv, 112  
     take counsel with the host, iv, 113  
     fight, and escape from, Íránian outpost, iv, 116  
 Lahhâk, Farshîdward and, referred to, iv, 118, 120, 126  
     repose themselves, iv, 121  
     corpses of, brought back by Bîzhan, iv, 126, 132  
     deaths of, announced to Afrâsiyâb, iv, 152  
 Lambak, a water-carrier, 164  
     entertains Bahrâm Gûr, vii, 13 *seq.*  
     rewarded by Bahrâm Gûr, vii, 20  
 Land of Darkness. *See* Gloom.  
 Land-tax, Mahmûd's remission of, vi, 196, 208  
     Nûshîrwân's reform of, vii, 215, 225  
 Latin version, early, of Pseudo-Callisthenes. *See* Julius Valerius.  
 Launderer, a, foster-father of Dârâb, 158, v, 292  
     finds Dârâb in the Farât, v, 296  
     Dârâb adopted by, and his wife, v, 297  
     quits his home with wife and Dârâb and settles elsewhere, v, 298  
     becomes wealthy but sticks to trade, v, 298  
     perturbed at Dârâb's youthful escapades, v, 298  
     brings up Dârâb to be a cavalier, v, 299  
     Dârâb's lack of natural affection for, v, 300  
     wife of, informs Dârâb of his case, v, 300  
     Rashnawâd sends for, and his wife, v, 304  
     informed by, of the case of Dârâb, v, 308  
     visits, with his wife, Dârâb at his accession, v, 311  
     dismissed with gifts, v, 312  
 Lâzhawardî, fort, ix, 93  
 Lazica, region on the eastern shore of the Black Sea, vii, 215; viii, 194

- Lazic war, renewed by Hurmuzd, viii, 76  
 Bahrám Chúbína defeated in, viii, 76  
 Leech of Kaid, 159. *See* Kaid.  
 Legend, Syriac Christian, of Alexander. *See* Syriac.  
 Leo, constellation, ii, 405; iii, 81, 318; vi, 172, 180; vii, 410; viii, 122, 394  
 Libra, constellation, i, 310; vi, 97  
 Life, Fount of. *See* Fount.  
 Water of, 160 *Id.*  
 Lutarch's, of Alexander the Great, vi, 67  
 Lion, lions, slain by Rakhsh, 143, ii, 45  
 Asfandiyár, 156, v, 125  
 Bahrám Gúr, 163-165, vii, 55, 77  
 -ape, 173, viii, 322 *seq.*  
 Lion's House, constellation of Leo, i, 188  
 Lion's Mouth, the, place, iv, 245  
 Loadstone, chamber of, viii, 275  
 suspended cavalier in, viii, 275  
 Longimanus (Dirázdst), title of Artaxerxes I, son of Xerxes, v, 281  
 Lucerne (*Medicago sativa*), tax on, vii, 215  
 Lúch, perhaps = Kúch *q.v.*, vii, 362  
 captives from, settled at Súrán, vii, 328  
 Luhrásp, Sháh, 154, 155, i, 42; ii, 3, 9; iv, 57, 65, 135, 337, 347, 356 *seq.*; v, 10, 20, 21 and *note*, 26, 29, 30, 38, 64, 68, 80, 86, 87, 90 *seq.*, 98 *seq.*, 104, 114, 141, 154, 155, 157, 159, 160, 167, 171, 180, 183, 205, 208, 243, 255, 281, 284; vi, 55, 200; viii, 95, 148, 213, 270, 392; ix, 104  
 sent to the Aláns by Kai Khusrau, iv, 14  
 Luhrásp, successes of, iv, 60, 71  
 troops of, recalled, iv, 145  
 nominated by Surúsh to be Kai Khusrau's successor, iv, 281  
 crowned by Kai Khusrau, iv, 300  
 Zál's protest against the succession of, iv, 301  
 succession of, justified by Kai Khusrau, iv, 301  
 acknowledged by Zál, iv, 302  
 the chiefs, iv, 303  
 undertakes to respect Kai Khusrau's wives, iv, 305  
 counselled and farewelled by Kai Khusrau, iv, 306  
 addresses the chiefs, iv, 311  
 receives the fealty of Zál and other chiefs, iv, 312  
 praises and rewards Zál, iv, 312  
 coronation of, iv, 312  
 Reign of, 154, iv, 314 *seq.*  
 Note on, iv, 314 *seq.*  
 harangues the chiefs, iv, 316  
 makes Balkh his capital, iv, 317  
 builds the Fire-temple of Barzín, iv, 318  
 shows favour to the grandsons of Kai Káuś, iv, 318, 321 *seq.*  
 refuses to appoint Gush-tásp his heir, iv, 319  
 sends Zarír in pursuit of Gushtásp, iv, 320  
 pardons Gushtásp, iv, 322  
 hears of Gushitásp's flight, iv, 323  
 consults Zarír and the sages, iv, 323  
 searches in vain for Gush-tásp, iv, 324  
 receives Kálús, Caesar's envoy, in audience, iv, 357  
 entertains Kálús, iv, 357  
 consults Zarír, iv, 358  
 questions Kálús, iv, 358

Luhrásp, dismisses Kálús with honour, iv, 359  
 sends Zarír with other chiefs on a mission to Rúm, iv, 359  
 message of, to Cæsar, iv, 361,  
 welcomes and crowns Gush-tásp on his return to Írán, iv, 364  
 resigns the throne to Gush-tásp and becomes a devotee, v, 31  
 converted by Zarduhsht, v, 33  
 advises Gushtásp to resign the kingship to Asfandiyár, v, 66  
 opposes Kuhram, v, 91  
 slain, v, 91, 93, 99  
 Asfandiyár's vow to avenge, v, 103  
 Lumsden, his edition of the Sháhnáma, i, 76  
 Luna. *See* Moon.

## M

Ma, Hittite goddess, vi, 71  
 =Cybele, vi, 71  
 priestesses of=Amazons, vi, 71  
 Macan, his edition of the Sháhnáma, i, 76; vi, 60  
 Mace, Faridún's, i, 161, 163, 165, 168  
 the making of, i, 158  
 Macedonia, vi, 81, 82  
 Macedonian invasion of the East, vi, 68, 69  
 Máchín (China), ii, 357 *note*, 370, 394; iii, 46, 253, 265;  
 iv, 151, 203, 229, 231, 234, 252; v, 142, 145; viii, 417; ix, 107  
 Machine, flying, of Kai Káu's, ii, 103  
 Macrianus, Prætorian prefect, vi, 294  
 treachery of, to Valerian, vi, 294

M'Crindle, *Ancient India* of, quoted, vi, 68, 80  
 Madá. *See* Medes.  
 Madá'in, Ctesiphon (Taisafún), and the neighbouring cities, 167, 174, vii, 201, 244, 266, 272, 337, 363; viii, 4, 46, 192, 193  
 Núshirwán sends his Rúman captives to, vii, 259  
 palace of Khusráu Parwíz at, story of, viii, 400  
 Mádik, king of the Kurds, meaning of, vi, 203, 256  
 Madlófryaf, mountain, part of the Alburz range, south-east of the Caspian, v, 30  
 Magi, priests of the Medes (Madá), i, 9; ii, 190; vi, 372, 373; vii, 171, 184  
 preservers of tradition, i, 56, 60  
 meaning of name, i, 56 and *note*  
 rise to power of, i, 58  
 influence of, declines after the Greek conquest, i, 59  
 principal seats of, i, 60  
 literature of, i, 61  
 language of, i, 64  
 compile the prose Sháhnáma for Abú Mansúr, i, 69  
 advocates of next-of-kin marriage, ii, 189  
 Magian, Magians, vii, 60  
 chant, vii, 60  
 fire, vii, 409  
 Magic, i, 51  
 derivation of, i, 56  
 sympathetic, i, 8  
 Magism, v, 11  
 Magog. *See* Gog.  
 Magophonia, import of, i, 59  
 Magus. *See* Magi.  
 Mahábhárata, Indian Epic, iii, 8; iv, 316; vi, 31, 80  
 the passing of the five Pándavas in, compared with that of Kai Khusráu, iv, 138

- Máh Áfríd, grandmother of  
Minúchihr, i, 205
- Máh Áfríd, daughter of Túr, iv,  
304
- Máh Áfríd, daughter of Barzín,  
vii, 53  
married to Bahrám Gúr,  
vii, 53
- Máh Ázar, scribe, viii, 81
- Máhán, Íránian noble, v, 260, 263
- Mahbúd (Mebodes), minister of  
Kubád and Núshírwán,  
168; vii, 213  
instrumental in making  
Núshírwán Sháh, vii, 316  
Núshírwán's treasurer, vii,  
319  
sons of, vii, 319  
serve Núshírwán's meals,  
vii, 319, 321  
wife of, prepares Núshírwán's food, vii, 321, 322  
envied by Zúrán, vii, 319  
fall of, vii, 317, 322  
Núshírwán's repentance  
with regard to, vii, 317,  
325
- Máh i-Ázáda Khú, wife of Túr, i,  
188  
meaning of, i, 188 *note*
- Máhiyár, minister of Dará,  
murders Dará, vi, 52  
tells Sikandar of the murder, vi, 52  
arrested by Sikandar, vi, 53  
executed, vi, 56, 88
- Máhiyár, Íránian noble, vii, 38  
praises Bahrám Gúr, vii, 38
- Máhiyár, a jeweller, 164, vii, 55  
*seq.*  
daughter of. *See* Árzú.  
entertains Bahrám Gúr, vii,  
59 *seq.*
- Mahmúd, Sultán (A.D. 999-  
1030), i, 100; iii, 15;  
viii, 24  
account of, i, 21  
brothers of, i, 21, 114  
Firdausi's praise of, 139,  
152, 155, 156, 160, 161;  
i, 29 *seq.*, 112 *seq.*; iv,
- Mahmúd—*cont.*  
135 *seq.*, 139; v, 30, 89,  
118, 262; vi, 20, 107, 279,  
292, 370; vii, 277; ix,  
122  
Firdausi's feeling against,  
i, 33; vi, 62, 92 *seq.* and *note*  
Satire on, i, 23, 40 *seq.*  
alleged ill treatment by,  
i, 33, 36 *seq.*, vii, 431  
alleged repentance of, i, 45;  
iv, 8  
occasion of, iv, 8  
approves of Firdausi's ver-  
sion of the fight between  
Rustam and Ashkabús,  
iii, 109  
remission of the land-tax by,  
vi, 186, 208
- Mahraspand, father of Ádarbád,  
v, 16 *note*
- Mahrwí, viii, 248
- Máhwí (=Sháhwí ?), one of  
Firdausi's authorities, i,  
67; vi, 382
- Máhwí, Persian chief, 176, ix,  
70, 74, 89, 95, 97, 100 *seq.*,  
118  
described, ix, 87  
Farrukhzád entrusts Yaz-  
dagird to, ix, 95  
accepts charge of Yaz-  
dagird, ix, 96  
becomes disaffected to Yaz-  
dagird, ix, 96  
writes to Bizhan, ix, 96, 116  
betrays Yazdagird, ix, 97,  
98, 116, 117  
quest of, for Yazdagird, ix,  
100  
has tidings of Yazdagird, ix,  
101  
consults his warriors, ix, 106  
son of, counsels, ix, 107  
receives Balkh and Harát,  
ix, 115  
governor of Marv, ix, 120  
put to death with his  
sons, ix, 120  
sends miller to slay Yaz-  
dagird, ix, 107, 116

- Máhwí, sends troops after miller with instructions, ix, 107  
troops of, strip corpse of Yazdagird, ix, 108  
hears of death of Yazdagird, ix, 108  
bids miller throw corpse of Yazdagird into stream, ix, 108  
slays monks, ix, 113  
consults his intimates and minister, ix, 113  
advised by his minister, ix, 113  
claims the throne on false pretences, ix, 114  
becomes master of Khurásán, ix, 114  
evil rule of, ix, 114  
makes war on Bízhan, ix, 115  
conduct of, to Barsám, ix, 117  
crosses Oxus and camps at Baigand, ix, 118  
flees, ix, 118  
overtaken by Barsám, ix, 118  
captured by Barsám, ix, 119  
put to death by Bízhan, ix, 120
- Mai, city in Turkistán, i, 252, 256, 261; iv, 278, 284; vii, 91, 331, 385, 421
- Mai, king of Hind, vii, 395, 396, 399, 401, 403, 404
- Maidán, riding-ground, i, 83
- Maidhyó-maunggha, cousin and first convert to Zarduhsht, v, 17
- Mail of Siyáwush, iii, 58, 60, 61, 69, 81; iv, 40, 41, 44, 45, 51  
referred to, iv, 42, 43
- Maishán (Mesene), a small state on the lower Tigris, vi, 199
- Májúj (Magog), 160. *See* Yájúj.
- Makátúra, Turkman chief, 173, viii, 317  
dominates the Khán, viii, 318
- Makátúra, slighted by the Khán, viii, 318  
challenges Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 319  
fight of, with Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 320
- Mákh, viii, 71, 78
- Makhzúm, place, 93
- Makná Bád, city, iii, 109
- Makrán (Gedrosia, Balúchistán), country on the shore of the Arabian Sea, ii, 80, 82; iv, 136, 203, 231, 234, 237 *seq.*, 254; vi, 182, 202, 397; vii, 390; viii, 393, 417  
king of, 153, iv, 238 *seq.*  
refuses facilities to Kai Khusrau, iv, 239, 242  
buried by Kai Khusrau, iv, 243
- Kai Khusrau marches upon, iv, 241  
stops pillage of, iv, 243, 244  
prepares a fleet in, iv, 244  
sails for Gang-dizh from, iv, 245  
returns to, iv, 251  
goes to Chín from, iv, 251  
Alexander the Great's return by, productive of marvels, vi, 69  
etymology of, vi, 69
- Malcolm, Sir John, identification and description of Mount Sipand by, i, 236; v, 30  
version of Suhráb by, ii, 118  
on the scene of the death of Bahrám Gúr, vii, 6
- Málíka, daughter of Táír, vi, 3, 324  
legend of, vi, 323, 330 *seq.*  
offers to betray her father's stronghold to Shápúr, vi, 331  
makes the garrison drunk, vi, 333  
opens the gate to Shápúr, vi, 333

- Málíka, goes to Shápúr's camp,  
vi, 333
- Mamigonian, Armenian family,  
viii, 188
- Mámún, Khalífa, i, 14; vii, 382,  
430
- Man, the First (Gaiúmart *q.v.*),  
i, 5  
on the nature of, 139, i, 104  
of Sigz (Rustam), ii, 100 and  
*note*
- Man, weight, i, 290 and *note*;  
viii, 148 and *note*, 314, 399
- Manáchihr, i, 206 *note*
- Manda, nomads, i, 18  
confused with the Madá  
(Medes), i, 18; vi, 194  
empire of the=empire of  
the Medes, ii, 191
- Mandane, daughter of Astyages,  
ii, 190  
=Farangís in legend, ii, 191
- Mandanes (Dandamis, Kait, Kai-  
han, Kand, Kaid *q.v.*), vi,  
61  
Onesicritus and, vi, 61  
identical with Kaid, vi, 62
- Mání, heresiarch, 163, ii, 19 *note*;  
v, 118 and *note*; vi, 307;  
vii, 188  
account of, vi, 327  
-gate, vi, 327, 359  
teaching of, vi, 328  
disputation of, with the high  
priest, vi, 358  
executed, vi, 359
- Manicheism, ii, 19 *note*
- Manízha, daughter of Afrásiyáb,  
150, iii, 285, 295 *seq.*, 304,  
308 *seq.*, 348, 349  
Bízhan and, Story of, 150,  
iii, 7, 12  
historical basis of, iii, 11  
Mohl on, iii, 285  
Pirdausí on, iii, 287  
referred to, viii, 72  
sends her nurse to Bízhan,  
iii, 297  
invites Bízhan to visit her,  
iii, 298  
drugs Bízhan, iii, 299
- Manízha, wakes Bízhan in Afrási-  
yáb's palace, iii, 300  
holds revel with Bízhan, iii,  
300  
disgraced, iii, 309  
made Bízhan's attendant,  
iii, 310  
referred to, iii, 318, 319  
hears of the arrival of Rus-  
tam's caravar, iii, 337  
interviews of, with Rustam,  
iii, 337, 342  
bears Rustam's ring to  
Bízhan, iii, 340  
kindles signal fire for Rus-  
tam, iii, 344  
receives gifts from Kai  
Khusrau, iii, 356
- Manshúr, Túránian hero, iii, 161,  
165, 172, 182, 185, 199,  
205, 210, 213, 226, 231,  
241, 251, 256  
comes to the aid of Pírán,  
iii, 151  
hears of the coming of Rus-  
tam, iii, 175
- Mansion of Gushtásp, Fire-tem-  
ple, v, 75
- Mansúr bin Núh, Sámánid prince  
(A.D. 961—976), i, 20, 21  
v, 21; vii, 5
- Manúshán, a king in Párs, iv,  
146, 180, 191
- Mánúshkar (Minúchihr), i, 338
- Mánwí, viii, 253
- Marathi, Scythian people, iv, 315
- Marchlord, ill-disposed, op-  
presses Rai, 174, viii, 366  
destroys gutters and cats,  
viii, 366  
recalled, viii, 368
- Marcian (Bátarún *q.v.*), viii, 41
- Marco Polo, Venetian traveller  
(A.D. 1254—1324), vi, 74
- Mardánsháh, (Yalán-sína *q.v.*),  
viii, 74, 76; ix, 5, 6  
son of, ix, 5, 6  
conspires against Khusrau  
Parwíz, ix, 6  
mutilation and execution of,  
ix, 6

- Mardánsháh (Mardásas), son of Shírin, viii, 189, 191, 193, 196; ix, 39  
 execution of, ix, 7  
 Mardás, father of Zahhák, Story of, 140, 1, 135 *seq.*  
 murdered by Zahhák, i, 137  
 Mardásas. *See* Mardánsháh.  
 Mardwí, Túránian hero, iii, 77  
 Mardwí, Persian official, viii, 21  
 Mardwí, gardener, viii, 397  
 Margh, city in Turkistán, i, 256; iv, 278, 284; vii, 91, 331, 412, 421  
 Mark, birth. *See* Birthmark.  
 Marriage, next of kin (Khvaitúkdas), i, 60; ii, 189; v, 17  
 Mars, planet, i, 72, 276, 332, 339; ii, 247, 407; iii, 110, 159, 178, 318, 332; vii, 92, 252, 418; viii, 395; ix, 73, 89  
 Martyropolis, ceded by Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 188  
 Márúsipand, palace, ix, 11  
 Márút, angel, iii, 286  
 Marv, oasis and city in ancient northern Khurásán, now in Turkistán, 173, i, 45; ii, 101; v, 29, 260, 261, 263; vii, 174, 357; viii, 20, 93, 173, 336, 337, 346 *seq.*, 352, 356; ix, 70, 89, 116, 117  
 early seat of Aryan civilization, i, 7  
 as rhyme-word, vii, 88 *note*  
 Khán reaches, vii, 88  
 Bahrám Gúr marches on, vii, 89  
 Ázád Sarv finds Búzurjmíhr at, vii, 283  
 traditional scene of Yazdagird's death, ix, 70  
 Yazdagird at, ix, 97, 116  
 sage of, ix, 110  
 apothegm of, ix, 110  
 conduct of Máhwí to Barsám at, ix, 117  
 Guráz, son of Máhwí, governor of, ix, 120  
 Marvell, quoted, viii, 399 *note*  
 Marvrúd (Murgháb), river in Khurásán flowing into and forming the Marv oasis, ii, 228; iv, 255; viii, 92  
 Mary, Maryam, mother of Jesus, viii, 276 *note*, 277 *note*  
 Maryam, daughter of Cæsar, 173, 174, viii, 188, 192, 276 *note*, 278, 279, 373, 374, 380,  
 murder of, viii, 193, 389  
 referred to, viii, 255, 266, 269, 270, 371, 381, 389  
 counselled by Cæsar, viii, 279, 280  
 Niyátús put in charge of, viii, 280  
 as peace-maker, viii, 310  
 Mashad, city in Khurásán, ii, 189  
 Máshya and Máshyói, the offspring of Gaiúmart, the first man, i, 117, 131  
 Masius, Mount, viii, 41  
 Massagetae, tribe, iii, 192  
 Mas'údí, Arabic historian (died A.D. 956), v, 293; vi, 62, 63, 82, 193, 257, 313, 315; vii, 3, 4, 6, 153, 280  
 version of the death of Rustam by, v, 261  
 genealogies of Pápak according to, vi, 200  
 'Book of Indication and Revision' by, vi, 252  
 apologue of the owls by, vi, 310  
 parentage of Yazdagird son of Shápúr according to, vi, 371  
 account of the fortifications at Darband by, vii, 215  
 origin of the game of nard according to, vii, 382  
 origin of the game of chess according to, vii, 382  
 on Búzurjmíhr, viii, 71  
 Maundeville, Sir John, vi, 13, 72  
 Maurice, Eastern Roman Emperor, viii, 187, 188

Maurice, helps Khusrâw Parwîz  
on terms, viii, 188  
murder of, viii, 193  
Mausîl, Armenian prince, viii,  
188, 189, 248, 282, 295  
entertains Bandwî, viii, 249  
Khusrâw Parwîz and, viii, 283  
referred to, viii, 293 and  
*note*  
Mâ wara 'u'n-Nahr (Kuhistân  
*q.v.*, Transoxania), ii, 19,  
199; iii, 151  
Maximian, Roman Emperor, viii,  
188  
Mayam, place, iii, 40, 41, 53, 111  
Mayors of the palace, Oriental, 1,  
14  
Mazaga, Indian city, vi, 65  
taken by Alexander the  
Great, vi, 65  
Mâzana (Mâzandarân, *q.v.*), ii, 28  
Mâzandarân, region lying be-  
tween the Alburz range  
and the Caspian, 143, i,  
4, 5, 12, 253, 279, 290,  
294, 296, 298, 319, 323,  
339, 378; ii, 25 *seq.*, 33,  
34, 36 *seq.*, 45, 55, 60 *seq.*,  
66 *seq.*, 75, 76, 78, 81, 93,  
105, 139, 143 *seq.*, 293,  
iii, 144, 167, 207, 215;  
232, 243, 256, 260, 324,  
330; iv, 86, 136, 296,  
299; v, 116, 117, 203,  
207, 220; vi, 373; vii,  
215; viii, 48; ix, 74  
approach to, from Irân, ii  
28  
description of, ii, 27  
king of, 143, ii, 39, 43, 54,  
62 *seq.*  
interview of, with Rus-  
tam, ii, 67  
fight of, with Rustam, ii,  
73  
transforms himself into a  
rock, ii, 74  
death of, ii, 75  
Mâzandarânian, a native of, or  
pertaining to, Mâzan-  
darân, iii, 320

Mazda, Ahura. *See* Ahura.  
Mazdak, heresiarch, 166, i, 63;  
vii, 184, 185  
disputation of, with Nûshîr-  
wân, vii, 188, 206 *seq.*  
account of, vii, 188, 201  
becomes chief minister to  
Kubâd, vii, 201  
influence of, over Kubâd,  
vii, 201  
parable of, to Kubâd in time  
of drought, vii, 201  
practical application of  
Kubâd's reply by, vii,  
202  
converts Kubâd, vii, 204  
preaching and practice of,  
vii, 204  
attempt of, to convert Nûsh-  
îrwân, vii, 205  
Kubâd decides against, vii,  
208  
executed with his followers  
by Nûshîrwân, vii, 208  
Mazdakism, vii, 184  
Mazdakites, vii, 184  
great assembly of, vii, 205  
massacre of, vii, 185, 208  
Mebodes. *See* Mahbûd.  
Mecca, city, v, 31, 166; vi, 120;  
ix, 69  
Sikandar's visit to, vi, 64,  
119 *seq.*  
account of, vi, 64  
Medea, land of, i, 57  
Mede, Medes (Madâ), Aryan  
people, i, 7, 10, 17, 56, 58,  
72; vi, 194, 203  
account of, i, 9  
confused with the Manda  
(nomads), i, 18; vi, 194  
empire of the=empire of  
the Manda, i, 17; ii, 191  
Media, iv, 315; vi, 31; vii, 6;  
Magna, vi, 201, 203, 256  
vii, 214  
Median, vi, 195  
Median, language (Zend), i, 64  
*seq.*  
empire, ii, 9; vi, 194  
Mediterranean, the, vi, 294



- Megara, city in Greece, vi, 323  
*note*  
legend concerning, vi, 323  
*note*
- Megasthenes, Greek writer,  
*temp.* Alexander the  
Great, vi, 68
- Meherdates (Mílád), Parthian  
prince, iii, 10 *seq.*
- Memphis, Egyptian city, vi, 82  
corpse of Alexander the  
Great taken to, vi, 82
- Merchant, a, 164  
entertains and displeases  
Bahram Gúr, vii, 39  
made the slave of his own  
apprentice, vii, 42
- Merchants, Íránian, made acces-  
sories to Bahram Gúr's  
flight from Ilind, vii, 133,  
134
- Mercury, planet, i, 72; iii, 159,  
318; v, 243; vi, 171, 224;  
viii, 299, 395; ix, 73
- Meroe, island and city of, vi, 13,  
65
- Meru, mythical mountain, iv, 139
- Mesopotamia, vi, 30, 294, 321  
Arab invasions of, iii, 14  
annexed by Arabs, ix, 68
- Mesopotamian desert, vi, 322
- Messiah, the, viii, 267
- Mih-Ázar-Gushnasp, minister of  
Ardshír, son of Shírwí, in  
Arabic Tabarí, ix, 43  
put to death, ix, 43
- Mihr, month and day, i, 88, 89,  
174, 175, 232; vi, 24, 33,  
55
- Mihr, feast, ix, 40
- Mihr, sacred Fire. *See* Mihr  
Barzín.
- Mihr Ázar, priest, vii, 188, 206  
assists Núshírwán in his  
disputation with Mazdak,  
vii, 206
- Mihr Barzín, sacred Fire and  
Fire-temple, vi, 201, 212  
and *note*  
established by Gushtásp, v,  
34
- Mihr Barzín, Íránian warrior,  
*temp.* Bahram Gúr, vii, 85
- Mihr Bídád, Íránian magnate,  
vii, 21  
entertains Bahram Gúr, vii,  
22
- Mihr 'Hasis, minister of Ardshír,  
son of Shírwí, in Persian  
Tabarí, ix, 43  
put to death, ix, 43
- Mihr Hurmuzd, Íránian noble,  
175, viii, 196; ix, 34  
account of, ix, 5  
referred to, ix, 6, 33  
conspires against Khusrau  
Parwíz, ix, 6  
put to death, ix, 7  
described, ix, 33
- Mihr-i-Núsh, second son of  
Astandiyár, ii, 3; v, 80,  
283  
slain by Farámarz, v, 227  
death of, reported to Asfan-  
diyár by Bahman, v, 227  
corpse of, sent to Gush-  
tásp, v, 232
- Mihr-i-Núsh, Persian sage, vii,  
270  
quoted, vii, 270
- Mihr-i-Núsh, ix, 103  
pleads with Máhwí for Yaz-  
dagird, ix, 103
- Mihr Narsí, chief minister of  
Bahram Gúr and of his  
son Yazdagird, vii, 4, 153  
sons of, vii, 4
- Mihr Píruz, Íránian warrior,  
*temp.* Bahram Gúr, vii, 85
- Mihráb, king of Kábul, 141, 142,  
i, 234, 361; ii, 12, 14, 18, 21  
visited by Zál, i, 256  
tributary to Sám, i, 256  
daughter of (Rúdába), i, 257,  
v, 203  
praises Zál to Sindukht, i,  
260  
hears from Sindukht of the  
loves of Zál and Rúdába,  
i, 284  
reproaches Rúdába, i, 289  
Sám sent against, i, 292

- Mihráb, hears of Sám's coming,  
i, 292, 299  
Minúchihr's assent to  
Zál's marriage, i, 314  
felicitates Síndukht, i, 315  
Síndukht and, prepare to  
welcome Sám and Zál, i,  
314  
entertain Sám and Zál, i,  
317  
visit Sám, i, 319  
hears of the birth of Rustam,  
i, 323  
goes with Zál and Rustam  
to meet Sám, i, 324  
parleys with Shamásás and  
Khazarwán to gain time,  
i, 358  
writes to summon Zál, i,  
359
- Mihrak, Tribal King, 161, vi, 3,  
199, 237, 238, 257, 267,  
268, 270, 272, 273; vii,  
185, 192  
= Mithrak, vi, 206  
slain by Ardshír Pápakán,  
vi, 241  
daughter of, 161, vi, 3, 241,  
256, 257, 268 *seq.*, 272  
escapes, vi, 241, 256, 268  
referred to in Kaid's  
prophecy, vi, 267  
discovered by Shápúr, vi,  
268 *seq.*  
informs Shápúr of her  
birth, vi, 270  
marries Shápúr, vi, 270  
birth of her son Urmuzd,  
vi, 271  
= Mithrak = Mádik = Arda-  
wán (?), vi, 256  
importance of, in legend, vi,  
257, 267; viii, 72, 73
- Mihrak, servant of Núshírwán,  
viii, 18 19
- Mihrán, Indian sage, 159, vi,  
91, 97  
consulted by Kaid about  
his dreams, vi, 92 *seq.*  
interprets Kaid's dreams,  
vi, 94 *seq.*
- Mihrán, family, vii, 156  
importance of, viii, 72, 73  
proverb on, vii, 185  
account of, vii, 185  
rivalry of, with family of  
Káran, vii, 185  
men of mark among the,  
vii, 186, 187; viii, 74
- Mihrán, treasurer to Yazdagird  
son of Shápúr, vi, 387
- Mihrán, Íránian general, vii, 251  
commands the centre of  
Núshírwán's host, vii, 251
- Mihrán, archscribe, viii, 76  
sent with Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 106  
counsels Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 122 and *note*  
seeks refuge, viii, 123  
congratulates Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 129  
takes counsel with Kharrád,  
viii, 159  
flees from Balkh and is  
retaken, viii, 159  
pardoned by Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 160  
referred to, viii, 163  
speech of, viii, 166
- Mihrán Sitád, Íránian high priest  
and envoy, *temp.* Núshírwán,  
168, vii, 186, 350,  
361, 363; viii, 96, 100  
attempt of the Khán to out-  
wit, vii, 352  
takes charge of the Khán's  
daughter, vii, 354  
receives gifts from the Khán,  
vii, 356  
welcomed on his return, vii,  
357  
embassage of, referred to,  
viii, 72, 97  
sent for by Hurmuzd, viii, 97  
tells of prophecy about  
Bahrám Chúbína, viii,  
98, 216  
death of, viii, 99
- Mihrán Sitád, merchant, enter-  
tains Khusráu Parwíz,  
viii, 251

- Mihrás, father of Ilyás ruler of Khazar, iv, 352
- Mihrás, Caesar's envoy, vii, 261  
negotiates peace with Núsh-irwán, vii, 261
- Mihrdát. *See* Meherdates.
- Mihrgán, feast, i, 175 and *note*, iv, 313; vi, 230 and *note*, 245
- Mihrmás, vi, 200
- Míl as rhyme word, i, 75
- Mílád, Íránian hero, iii, 11, 12, 25, 29, 145, 274, 289, 293, 345; iv, 83, 147, 191; vi, 394; viii, 72, 211  
import of word, viii, 73  
customs of, viii, 216
- Mílád (Taxila), Indian city, vi, 102, 109, 110  
situation of, vi, 62
- Sikandar approaches, vi, 98
- Military obsequies, *temp.* Núshirwán, vii, 252
- Milk, bane of, vii, 125 and *note*, 324  
easily "turned," vii, 317  
poisoned by the Evil Eye, vii, 320 *seq.*, 324, 325
- Mill, 176, ix, 89, 116
- Miller, a, daughters of, 164  
becomes Bahrám Gúr's father-in-law, vii, 34  
dignified by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 34
- Miller, a, 176, ix, 70  
Yazdagird and, ix, 99  
informs chief of Zark about Yazdagird, ix, 100  
informs Máhwí about Yazdagird, ix, 101  
bidden to slay Yazdagird, ix, 107  
fling corpse into stream, ix, 108
- Mingrelia, province on the eastern shore of the Black Sea, vii, 215
- Minister, piece in chess. *See* Wazír.
- Minos, king of Crete, vi, 323 *note*  
legend of, vi, 323 *note*
- Mínú, viii, 253 and *note*
- Minúchihir, Sháh, 140-142, i, 42, 90, 91, 209 *seq.*, 274, 275, 319, 337, 339 *seq.*, 348, 363; ii, 19, 29, 33, 36, 37, 302, 318, 400; iii, 9, 30, 87, 115; iv, 10, 65, 69, 70, 76, 136, 206, 283, 285, 298; v, 12, 174, 252, 284; vi, 200, 353; viii, 219, 223, 392; ix, 103  
birth of, i, 206  
etymology of, i, 206 and *note*, 234 and *note*  
Faridún's gifts to, i, 207  
goes to fight Salm and Túr, i, 216  
makes proclamation to the host, i, 218  
contends against Salm and Túr, i, 219  
prepares for a night-surprise, i, 220  
sends Túr's head to Faridún, i, 222  
sends Káran to take the Castle of the Aláns, i, 223 *seq.*  
hears of Káran's success, i, 225  
defeats and slays Karkwí, i, 225 *seq.*  
pursues and slays Salm, i, 227  
pardons Salm's troops, i, 229  
sends Salm's head and a letter to Faridún, i, 229  
return of, in triumph, i, 230  
welcomed by Faridún, i, 230  
confided to Sám by Faridún, i, 231  
enthroned by Faridún, i, 232  
mourning of, for, and burial of, Faridún, i, 233  
Reign of, 141, i, 234 *seq.*  
Note on, i, 234 *seq.*  
accession and inaugural address of, i, 237  
Sám's address to, i, 238

- Minúchihr, hears of Sám's finding of Zál, i, 248  
 sons of, i, 248  
 sends Naudar to congratulate Sám, i, 248  
 summons Sám and Zál to court, i, 249  
 Sám tells the story of his quest to, i, 250  
 Zál's horoscope taken by order of, i, 251  
 gifts of, to Sám, i, 251  
 hears of the case of Zál and Rúdába, i, 288  
 advises with the archimages, i, 288  
 welcomes Sám, i, 289  
 hears of Sám's campaign, i, 290  
 bids Sám destroy Mihráb and his belongings, i, 292  
 receives Zál well, i, 306  
 consults the astrologers as to Zál, i, 307  
 Zál proved by hard questions by order of, i, 308  
 Zál displays his accomplishment before, i, 311  
 gracious reply of, to Sám, i, 314  
 warned of his death by the astrologers, i, 335  
 counsels, and gives the throne to, Naudar, i, 335  
 dies, i, 336
- Minúchihr, son of Árash, iv, 149  
 commands the troops from Khurásán, iv, 148  
 slays Kuhílá, iv, 181  
 commands the left, iv, 191
- Mírín, Rúman chief, 154  
 asks Cæsar's second daughter, Dilánjám, in marriage, iv, 333  
 bidden by Cæsar to slay the wolf of Fáskún, iv, 333  
 casts a horoscope, iv, 334  
 asks Hishwí to interest Gushtásp in his behalf, iv, 334
- Mírín, provides Gushtásp with a steed and arms, iv, 336  
 goes with Gushtásp and Hishwí to the forest of Fáskún, iv, 337  
 Hishwí and, welcome Gushtásp on his return, iv, 339  
 informs Cæsar that he has slain the wolf, iv, 341  
 marries Cæsar's daughter, iv, 341  
 consulted by Ahran, iv, 342  
 refers Ahran to Hishwí, iv, 344  
 letter of, to Hishwí, iv, 344  
 Ahran and, display their accomplishment on the riding-ground, iv, 349  
 Cæsar's wrath with, iv, 351  
 sends a scornful message to Cæsar, iv, 353  
 set to guard the baggage, iv, 355
- Mír Khánd (Mirkhond), Persi n historian (A.D. 1433-1498), v, 30; vi, 62, 315; vii, 3, 4, 6, 156, 159, 171, 183, 186; viii, 192  
 distich of, quoted, ix, 56
- Miskál, measure of weight, vi, 24  
 and *note*, viii, 394
- Misr (Egypt), 159, ii, 79, 80, 84, 94, 96, 143, 286; vi, 114, 115, 122, 181; viii, 381  
 king of *temp.* Kai Káuś, ii, 94, 95, 98  
 king of, defeated by Sikandar, vi, 37  
 welcomes Sikandar, vi, 121  
 invaded by Sikandar, vi, 37, 121  
 sea of, vi, 120  
 Sikandar stays a year in, vi, 121
- Mithra, Mitra, god, i, 7  
 Mithradát. *See* Meherdates.  
 Mithrak, vi, 206  
 = Mihrak, vi, 206  
 = Mihrak = Mádik = Arda-wán (?), vi, 256

- Mithrates. *See* Meherdates.
- Mithradates I, Parthian king, ii, 80
- Modes of speech, viii, 30
- Mohl, Jules, his edition and translation of the *Sháhnáma*, i, 76, 77; vi, 60  
on the Story of Bízhan and Manízha, iii, 285, 286  
the Worm, vi, 203
- Wisdom-literature, vii, 280
- Mong, Indian city, vi, 18
- Monks, ix, 109  
find and recover corpse of Yazdagird, ix, 109  
lament over and entomb Yazdagird, ix, 109 *seq.*  
sentences of, over Yazdagird, ix, 109 *seq.*  
slain by Máhwí, ix, 113
- Monophysite, viii, 195
- Moola Firooz, i, 201 *note*
- Moon, one of the seven planets, i, 72, viii, 395  
on the nature of the, 139, i, 205  
=Túr, i, 223  
divided by Muhammad, viii, 42, 67
- Moses, Hebrew law-giver, v, 294  
Salt Fish and, legend of, vi, 77  
Faith of, vi, 95
- Moses of Chorene, Armenian historian (5th century A.D.), i, 72  
account of Zakhák by, i, 144  
Rustam by, i, 236
- Mosul, city in Mesopotamia, vi, 322
- Mountain, mountains, sanctity of, i, 118  
of the Holy Questions, i, 62  
—skirt (Dáman-i-Kuh), iii, 15, 91, 95  
=Rakhsh, iii, 221, 251  
Old man of the, v, 30  
—sheep, personification of the divine Grace, vi, 201, 221. *See* Ram.
- Mu'áwiya, Khalífa (A.D. 661-679), i, 12, 13
- Múbíd, i, 83
- Mughíra, son of Shu'ba. *See* Shu'ba Mughíra, ix, 69
- Muhammad, the Prophet (about A.D. 571-632), i, 13, 40, 41; ii, 337 *note*; vi, 65, 190, 292; viii, 42, 191; ix, 69, 81 *seq.*  
on 'Alí, i, 12, 106  
praise of, i, 106  
quoted, i, 106, v, 166  
reference of, to Alexander the Great in the Kurán, vi, 15, 77
- Muhammad, birth of, vii, 213  
Núshírwán and, 170, viii, 68  
divides the Moon, viii, 42, 67  
letter of, to Khusrau Parwíz, ix, 66  
Flight of, referred to, ix, 122
- Muhammad Kásim, Arab general, vi, 325
- Muhammad Laskarí, friend of Firdausí, i, 99; iii, 286
- Muhammad Mahdí, his edition of the *Sháhnáma*, i, 76
- Muhammad, son of Abdú'r-Razak, i, 68, 99
- Muhammadan, Muhammadans, vi, 78; viii, 73  
elements in *Sháhnáma*, viii, 42  
ethics respected, viii, 74
- Mukaffa'. *See* Ibn Mukaffa'.
- Múltán, city in the Punjáb, vii, 140  
monarch of, entertained by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 140
- Mumasenni, tribe, i, 237
- Munzir, al, dynasty of, i, 55
- Munzir, prince of Híra, *temp.* Yazdagird son of Shápúr and Bahrám Gúr, 163, 164, vi, 372, 394, 406, 408; vii, 9  
visits Yazdagird, vi, 377  
monarch of Yaman, vi, 378

- Munzir, returns to Yaman with Bahrá'm, vi, 378  
 chooses nurses for Bahrá'm, vi, 378  
 dismisses Bahrá'm's tutors, vi, 380  
 provides Bahrá'm Gúr with steeds, vi, 380  
 provides Bahrá'm Gúr with slave-girls, vi, 381  
 goes to the chase with Bahrá'm Gúr, vi, 384  
 sends a picture of Bahrá'm Gúr shooting to Yazdagird, vi, 385  
 sends Bahrá'm Gúr with Nu'mán to Yazdagird, vi, 386  
 receives a letter from Yazdagird, vi, 387  
 counsels and sends Bahrá'm Gúr a slave-girl and presents, vi, 388  
 welcomes Bahrá'm Gúr on his return, vi, 390  
 supports Bahrá'm Gúr's claim to the throne, vi, 396 *seq.*  
 invades Írán, vi, 397  
 interview of, with Jawánwí, vi, 398 *seq.*  
 refers Jawánwí to Bahrá'm Gúr, vi, 398  
 advises Bahrá'm Gúr to negotiate with the Íránians, vi, 401, 404  
 intercedes with Bahrá'm Gúr for the Íránians, vii, 10  
 rewarded by Bahrá'm Gúr, vii, 10
- Munzir, son of Nu'mán, prince of Híra, *temp.* Núshírwán, 167, vii, 244 *seq.*  
 protected by Núshírwán, vii, 217  
 war of, with Hárith bin Jabala, vii, 217  
 sent by Núshírwán to invade Rúm, vii, 246
- Murdád, ameshaspenta, i, 88 ; iii, 287, 328
- Músh, town west of Lake Ván, viii, 188
- Mushkináb, a millet's daughter, vii, 32 and *note*  
 taken to wife by Bahrá'm Gúr, vii, 33
- Mushkinak, a miller's daughter, vii, 32 and *note*  
 taken to wife by Bahrá'm Gúr, vii, 33
- Mushm, ix, 85
- Mutawakkil, Khalífa (A.D. 847-861), i, 14  
 Cypress of Kishmar destroyed by, v, 28
- Mutilation, instances of, vi, 261, 323, 334, 348, 357, 404
- Mytilene, Chares of, Greek writer, *temp.* Alexander the Great, ii, 10 ; vi, 61  
 quoted, iv, 314
- N
- NABARZANES, Persian general, vi, 32  
 pardoned by Alexander the Great, vi, 32
- Nádir, Sháh, iii, 14
- Nadr son of Hárith, v, 166  
 recites the story of Rustam and Asfandiyár, v, 166  
 fate of, v, 166
- Nahávand, city, south of Hamadán, i, 12 ; ix, 68, 69  
 Yazdagird concentrates his forces at, ix, 68  
 Battle of, i, 12 ; ix, 69
- Náhíd (Katáyún, *q.v.*)
- Náhíd (Halai, Olympias ?), daughter of Pállakús and mother of Sikandar, 159, vi, 24 *seq.*, and *note*  
 married to Dáráb, vi, 25  
 troubled by offensive breath, vi, 26  
 cured, but repudiated by Dáráb, vi, 26  
 returns to Pállakús and gives birth to Sikandar, vi, 26

- Náhid, visits Dilárái and Rúshanak, vi, 89  
referred to, vi, 187
- Náhid, the planet Venus, vi, 211
- Nahrawán, city near Baghdád, east of the Tigris; also a canal on the eastern bank of that river, quitting it about 100 miles above, and rejoining it about 100 miles below, Baghdád, vii, 141; viii, 187, 204, 206, 231  
bridge of, viii, 223, 228 *seq.*  
broken down by Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 229
- Naushapur. *See* Nishápúr.
- Naitkún (Antigonus), minister of Sikandar, name of, assumed by Sikandar, vi, 66, 125 *seq.*  
personates Sikandar, vi, 125 *seq.*
- Kaidrúsh and his wife brought before, vi, 126  
sentenced to death by, vi, 126  
pardoned by, vi, 126  
=Sikandar, vi, 131, 133, 134, 141
- Nakula, one of the five Pándavas, iv, 138  
referred to, iv, 139
- Names, use of, in sympathetic magic, i, 8, 177, 179  
secret and public, viii, 372 and *note*
- Námkhást, Túránian hero, v, 24, 26  
goes as envoy to Gushtásp, v, 37, 40  
returns with Gushtásp's answer, v, 44  
given command of the centre, v, 56  
worsted by Girámí, v, 59
- Napata, city in Nubia, vi, 65
- Naphtha, 159, i, 56  
black, iv, 208, 209  
use of, in sieges, iv, 208, 209
- Naphtha, Sikandar's iron steeds filled with, 159, vi, 115
- Fúr's elephants and troops routed by the use of, vi, 116  
used to vitrify Sikandar's barrier, vi, 165
- Nard, game of, 169, viii, 371  
invention of, vii, 280, 381, 382, 389  
sent by Núshírwán to the Rája of Hind, vii, 5, 381  
meaning of, vii, 381  
symbolism of, vii, 381  
Mas'údí on, vii, 382  
described, vii, 389
- Narímán, Iránian hero, father of Sám and great-grandfather of Rustam, i, 42, 174, 207, 212, 239, 299, 333, 344; ii, 4, 49, 115, 119, 125, 126, 162, 354; iii, 17, 35; v, 196, 199, 202, 242, 262, 264, 266, 289  
death of, described, i, 329
- Narimanau, epithet of Keresáspa, i, 172, 174
- Narmpái, name of a tribe, 160, ii, 55 and *note*, 63, 64; vi, 71 and *note*
- Sikandar and, vi, 150
- Narses (Narsí, son of Bahrám, *q.v.*), Sásánian king
- Narses, Exarch, treatment of, by Empress Sophia, viii, 76
- Narses, general, viii, 189
- Narsí, Ashkánian king, vi, 197, 210
- Narsí, son of Bahrám, Sháh (Narses), 162, vi, 3, 313, 316, 325, 330, 331, 337; vii, 359  
Reign of, vi, 315 *seq.*  
Note on, vi, 315  
title of, vi, 315  
inaugural address of, vi, 315  
daughter of, 162. *See* Núsha.
- Narsí, brother of Bahrám Gúr, 165, vi, 3; vii, 4, 95, 100

- Narsí, made captain of the host,  
vii, 11  
regent, vii, 86  
fails to persuade the Írán-  
ians to resist the Khán,  
vii, 87  
Bahrám Gúr's letter to, vii,  
92  
writes to Bahrám Gúr on  
behalf of the Íránians, vii,  
94  
goes with the chiefs to wel-  
come Bahrám Gúr, vii, 96  
made ruler of Khurásán,  
vii, 99  
welcomes his brother on his  
return from Hind, vii, 137  
Nárwan, forest of, near Tanmísha  
*q.v.* i, 217, 218; ii, 341;  
viii, 356, 360, 377; ix, 86  
Nasíbín (Nisibis, *q.v.*), vi, 326  
cession of, vi, 355  
inhabitants of, refuse to  
submit to Shápúr, vi, 356  
taken by Shápúr, vi, 356  
Násiru'd-Dín, title of Subuk-  
tigin, *q.v.* i, 21, 100, 114  
Nasr, Amír, brother of Sultán  
Mahmúd, i, 21; vi, 196  
account of, i, 100  
referred to, i, 114  
praise of, i, 114; vi, 207  
Nasr, Arab chief, vi, 65  
appeals to Sikandar for  
help, vi, 120  
made ruler of Mecca, vi, 121  
Nasr, son of Ahmad, Sámánid,  
vii, 340  
patron of Rúdagí, vii, 383  
Nastár, Cæsar's master of the  
herds, iv, 325  
refuses to employ Gushtásp,  
iv, 326  
Nastíhan, Túránian hero, son of  
Wísa and brother of  
Pírán, 146, 151, i, 92; ii,  
264; iii, 79, 198, 210, 231,  
252; iv, 53 *seq.*, 61, 75,  
77  
pursues Kai Khusrau, ii,  
377 *seq.*  
Nastíhan, slain by Bízhan, iv,  
54  
Nastúh, Íránian hero, ii, 4; iii,  
46; iv, 148  
Nastúh, Túránian hero, iv, 156  
Nastúh, son of Míhrán Sitád, 173,  
viii, 225, 303  
advises Hurmuzd, viii, 96  
released by Bahrám Chú-  
bína, viii, 306  
Nastúr (Basta-vairi, Bastvár),  
son of Zarír, 155, v, 12,  
25, 26  
exploits of, foretold by  
Jámásp, v, 50  
given command of the rear,  
v, 55  
fights victoriously, v, 60  
goes in search of Zarír, v, 67  
finds Zarír's corpse and  
laments over it, v, 67  
exhorts Gushtásp to avenge  
Zarír, v, 68  
goes forth with Gushtásp's  
steed and armour, v, 69  
challenges Bídírafsh, v, 69  
fights with Bídírafsh, v, 70  
attacks, with Asfandiyár and  
Núsh Ázar, the Túrán-  
ians, v, 71  
leads the host home, is  
given a command, and  
invades Túrán, v, 74  
stationed on the Íránian  
left, v, 94  
commands the right, v, 109  
Nastúr, son of Shírín and  
Khusrau Parwíz, ix, 39  
Nature-worship, of the Aryans,  
i, 7, 51  
Nau-Ardshír=Nard, vii, 381  
Naubahár, Fire-temple at Balkh,  
31  
Luhrásp retires to, v, 31  
Naudar, Sháh, 142, i, 90, 91,  
369; ii, 20, 36, 70, 153,  
336, 400, 404; iii, 8, 24,  
39, 50, 57, 67, 86, 112,  
123, 132, 177, 187, 215,  
257, 289, 294, 327; iv,  
13, 61, 70, 157, 167, 178,



Naudar—*cont.*

- 191, 193, 206, 237, 254,  
262, 267; vii, 37, 171;  
viii, 223, 242  
embassies of, to Sâm, i, 248,  
288  
returns with Sâm to court, i,  
289  
counselled by Minúchihr and  
appointed his successor, i,  
335  
laments for Minúchihr, i,  
336  
Reign of, 142, i, 337 *seq.*  
Note on, i, 337  
accession of, i, 339  
evil rule of, i, 339  
revolts against, i, 339  
appeals to Sâm, i, 339  
the chiefs reconciled to,  
by Sâm, i, 341  
rewards Sâm, i, 342  
marches against Afrásiyáb  
to Dahistán, i, 345  
battles of, with Afrásiyáb,  
i, 348 *seq.*  
takes counsel with Káran,  
i, 349  
defeated, i, 350, 353  
sends Tús and Gustaham  
to conduct the Persian  
women to Alburz, i, 351  
beleaguered in Dahistán, i,  
353  
escapes from Dahistán, i,  
355  
pursued and taken by Afrá-  
siyáb, i, 355  
slain, i, 363  
the Íránians bewail, i, 364  
Naurúz, Persian New-year's day  
when the sun enters Aries,  
vi, 33, 55, 273, 389; viii,  
216  
Nawand, place in Khurásán on  
the Binalúd Kuh (?), ii,  
107  
Náztáb, a miller's daughter, vii,  
32 and *note*  
taken to wife by Bahráman  
Gúr, vii, 33

- Nearchus, admiral of Alexander  
the Great, vi, 12, 61, 70  
Ichthyophagi, account of  
by, quoted by Arrian, vi,  
69, 70  
Nectanebus II (Nekht-neb-f),  
the last Pharaoh  
personates Amen-Ra and  
becomes the legendary  
father of Alexander the  
Great, vi, 16  
story of, vi, 18 and *note*  
Need, personification of. *See*  
Greed.  
Negroes, the, described, vi, 73,  
157  
cause frost and snow to  
harm Sikandar, vi, 156,  
157  
Nekht-neb-f. *See* Nectanebus.  
Nereis. *See* Kalé.  
Nero, Roman emperor (A.D. 54-  
68), vii, 279  
Néryósang, ii, 82  
Nestorian, Nestorians, viii, 195  
Metropolitan, vii, 219  
Patriarch, vii, 219  
New Year, Persian, beginning of,  
i, 74, 88  
Feast of (Naurúz, New  
Year's Day), i, 74, 274;  
vii, 94, 200  
origin of, i, 133  
Nicaea, Indian city, vi, 18  
Nicephorium (Callinicus, Kálini-  
yús *q.v.*, Warigh, Rakka),  
viii, 188  
Nicolaus of Damascus, Greek  
historian *temp.* Augustus,  
vi, 195  
Nil, as rhyme-word, i, 75  
Nile, i, 40, 71, 114, 297; ii, 96,  
153, 217, 310, 402; iii,  
38, 41, 58, 208, 224, 225;  
iv, 145 *seq.*, 180, 333; v,  
176, 188, 191, 245; vi, 42,  
169, 171, 269; vii, 48,  
250, 344, 416; viii, 126,  
284, 293, 294; ix, 98  
Blue, vi, 65  
mistaken for Indus, vi, 68

Nimrúz = Sístán = Zābulistān,<sup>1</sup> i, 252, 264, 346, 357; ii, 21, 34, 69, 77, 80, 84, 338, 395; iii, 17, 35, 319; iv, 156, 188; v, 85, 248, 288; vii, 327; viii, 196, 284; ix, 5, 6  
 confirmed to Rustam by Kai Khusrau, iv, 297  
 Zāl by Luhrāsp, iv, 312  
 Sikandar marches to, vi, 175  
 satrapy of, ix, 69  
 Nineveh, viii, 193  
   fall of, i, 10  
   kings of, that attacked Irān, i, 10  
   battle near, viii, 194  
 Ninus, mythical founder of Nineveh, v, 202, 293  
 Ninyas, son of Ninus, v, 293  
 Niris, salt lake in Pārs, vi, 17  
   referred to, vi, 21  
 Nisā, city (Muhammadābād?) in Khurāsān or town in Kirmān, vii, 89; viii, 19  
 Nishāpūr, city in Khurāsān,<sup>2</sup> i, 36, 45; ii, 101; iv, 255; v, 28 *seq.*, 291; vi, 298; viii, 173; ix, 95  
 Nisibis (Nasībīn q.v.), city in northern Mesopotamia, i, 374  
   sieges of, i, 374, viii, 41  
   peace of, vi, 254  
   cession of, by Jovian, vi, 326  
   by Khusrau Parwiz (?), viii, 188  
 Nisus and Scylla, story of, vi, 323 *note*  
 Nitetis, vi, 16  
 Nivzār, son of Gushtāsp, 155, v, 26  
   death of, foretold by Jāmāsp, v, 50  
   slain, v, 60

Niyātūs (Theodosius, son of Maurice), 173, viii, 189, 281, 289; ix, 23  
 brother of Caesar, viii, 280, 310  
 put in charge of Maryam, vii, 280  
 welcomed by Khusrau Parwiz, viii, 280  
 wroth with Khusrau Parwiz, viii, 290  
 watches fight between Khusrau Parwiz and Bahram Chūbīna, viii, 297  
 entertained at banquet by Khusrau Parwiz, viii, 309  
 quarrel of, with Bandwī, viii, 309  
 threat of, to Khusrau Parwiz, viii, 310  
 reconciled to Bandwī, viii, 311  
 returns to Rūm, viii, 312  
 Nizāmī, Persian poet, viii, 192  
 Nizāmī-i-'Arūdī, Persian writer (12th century A.D.), i, 23  
   account of Firdausī by, i, 38 *seq.*, 45, 46  
 Nöldeke, Professor, v, 20, 21, 282; vi, 198 *note*, 199 and *note*, 253, 313, 372; viii, 71, 188  
 on the div Akwān, iii, 271  
 quoted, v, 118  
 treatise of, on the Alexander Romance, *etc.*, vi, 14 and *note*  
 on the Story of the Worm, vi, 203, 205, 206  
 on Haftwād, vi, 206  
 on the Gipsies, vii, 6  
 on Súfarai, vii, 171, 185  
 on Wisdom-literature, vii, 281

<sup>1</sup> Properly speaking, Zābulistān is the name of the hilly country about the upper waters of the Helmand, while Nimrúz and Sístán are synonymous names for the low lying lands into which its waters descend, but Firdausī does not seem to make any such distinction.

<sup>2</sup> The city has suffered much in the past from the ravages of war and earthquake and has been rebuilt several times on slightly varying sites.

- Nöldeke, on Romance of Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 73
- North, Sir Thomas (A.D. 1535-1603 ?), vii, 383  
version of the Fables of Bidpai by, vii, 383
- Northman, the, vi, 19  
found the Russian empire, vi, 19
- Note on Pronunciation, preceding text in each volume
- Nubia, vi, 65
- Núh bin Nasr, Sámánid prince (A.D. 942-954), vii, 5
- Núh II. bin Mansúr, Sámánid prince (A.D. 976-997), i, 21, 36; v, 21
- Nu'mán, prince of Híra, 163, 164, vi, 372, 396, 404  
visits Yazdagird, vi, 377  
goes to the chase with Bahrám Gúr, vi, 384  
goes to the Persian court with Bahrám Gúr, vi, 386  
returns to Yaman with letters and presents, vi, 387  
welcomes Bahrám Gúr on his revisiting Yaman, vi, 390  
invades Írán, vi, 397  
rewarded by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 10
- Nu'mán bin Munzír, prince of Híra, viii, 188; ix, 5  
put to death, viii, 190
- Nu'mán, Arab general, ix, 68  
sent by 'Umar to fight Yazdagird, ix, 68  
defeats Pírúzán at Nahá-vand, ix, 68  
slain, ix, 69
- Nurse, Maníza's, iii, 297  
interview of, with Bízhan, iii, 297
- Núsha (Dukhtnúsh), daughter of Narsí, 162, vi, 3, 324, 331  
carried off by the Arabs, vi, 323, 330
- Núsh Ázar, Fire-temple at Balkh, v, 92 *note*, 173, 241, 255  
burnt by the Turkmans, v, 93
- Núsh Ázar, youngest son of Asfandiyár, ii, 3, v, 166, 283, 285  
attacks, with Nastúr and Asfandiyár, the Túránian host, v, 71  
builder of a Fire-temple, v, 81  
with Asfandiyár at Gumbadán, v, 98  
informs Asfandiyár of Jámásp's arrival, v, 98, 99  
accompanies Asfandiyár from Gumbadán, v, 103  
slays Turkhán, v, 151  
wrangles with Zawára, v, 226  
slays Alwá, v, 226  
slain by Zawára, v, 227  
death of, reported to Asfandiyár by Bahman, v, 227  
corpse of, sent to Gushtásp, v, 232
- Núshírwán (Kisrá, Chosroes I), Sháh, 166-170, i, 27, 42; v, 260; vi, 3, 201; vii, 4, 199, 220, 273 *seq.*, 279 *seq.*, 320; viii, 3 *seq.*; 71, 72, 86 *seq.*, 98, 129, 169, 198, 200, 205, 209, 300, 312, 313, 377; ix, 22, 26, 71, 80, 92, 105, 109, 110, 119  
collector of Íránian tradition, i, 67  
quoted, vi, 208, 209 and *note*  
origin of name, vii, 185, 211 and *note*  
birth of, stories of, vii, 186, 197 *seq.*  
assistants of, against Mazdak, vii, 188, 206  
upbringing of, vii, 200  
Mazdak's attempt to convert, vii, 205  
disputation of, with Mazdak, vii, 206 *seq.*

Núshírwán, Kubád decides in favour of, vii, 208  
 executes Mazdak and his followers, vii, 208  
 Kubád's testament in favour of vii, 210, 316  
 Reign of, 167, vii, 212 *seq.*  
   Notes on, vii, 212 *seq.*, 279 *seq.*, 316 *seq.*, 380 *seq.*, viii, 3 *seq.*, 41 *seq.*  
 Roman Emperors contemporary with, vii, 212  
 historical events of reign of, in the Sháh-náma, vii, 213  
 marriage of, with the daughter of the Khán vii, 347, *seq.*  
   referred to, viii, 72, 97 *seq.*  
 wars of, with Rúm, vii, 213, 217  
 first campaign of, vii, 218, 249  
 conspiracy against, vii, 214, 316  
 division of empire by, vii, 214, 224; ix, 69  
 bargains of, with Justinian, vii, 214, 216 *seq.*  
 taxation reformed by, vii, 215, 224  
 wall of, in the Caucasus, 167, i, 16; vii, 215, 239  
   Mas'údi's account of, vii, 215  
 dealings of, with the Aláns, vii, 216  
   Gflán, vii, 216  
   Balúchís, vii, 217  
 Munzir supported by, vii, 217, 244  
 and consequent war with Rúm, vii, 217, 244  
 jealous of Justinian's successes in the West, vii, 217  
 promises to rule justly, vii, 221 *seq.*  
 attends muster at the insistence of Bábak, vii, 231  
 approves of Bábak's conduct, vii, 232

Núshírwán, method of, in levying troops, vii, 233  
 writes to Caesar on Munzir's behalf, vii, 245  
 supplies Munzir with troops for the invasion of Rúm, vii, 246  
 goes to Ázar Ábádagán, vii, 250  
 disposition of host by, vii, 251  
 addresses his troops, vii, 251  
 proclamations of, vii, 252, 365  
 burial of dead soldiers by, vii, 252  
 policy of, with enemies, vii, 253  
 takes Shúráb, vii, 254  
   Áráyish-i-Rúm, vii, 255  
   Caesar's treasures, vii, 255, 258  
 defeats Farfúriús, vii, 256  
 takes Antákiya, vii, 258  
 disposes of the Rúman captives, vii, 259, 327  
 Rúman cordwainer and, vii, 260  
 envoy from Caesar comes to, vii, 261  
 grants peace to Caesar, vii, 262  
 appoints Shírwí to receive the Rúman tribute, vii, 262  
 Christian wife of, vii, 263  
   mother of Núshzád, vii, 263, 274 *seq.*  
   helps Núshzád, vii, 266  
   laments for Núshzád, vii, 276  
 imprisons Núshzád, vii, 264  
 illness and reported death of, vii, 264, 265  
 hears of Núshzád's revolt, vii, 266  
 instructs Rám Barzín how to act, vii, 267 *seq.*  
 Seven Banquets of 168, vii, 280, 287 *seq.*  
   possible origin of, vii, 280

Núshírwán, Seven Banquets of, Búzurjmíhr's discourses at, vii, 287 *seq.*  
 dream of, vii, 282  
 consults the archimages, vii, 282  
 seeks for a dream-interpreter, vii, 282  
 dream of, interpreted by Búzurjmíhr, vii, 284  
 rewards and honours Búzurjmíhr, vii, 286, 289, 304, 311, 315  
 relations of, with Singibú, vii, 317  
 the Haitálíans, vii, 317  
 with Mahbúd and his sons, vii, 319 *seq.*  
 suspects Zúrán, vii, 324  
 greatness of, vii, 327  
 buildings of, vii, 327  
 embassy of Khán to, vii, 329  
 consults the chiefs as to Faghánísh, the Khán, and the Haitálíans, vii, 333  
 reply of chiefs to, vii, 334  
 rejoinder of, to chiefs, vii, 336  
 prepares for war with the Khán, vii, 337  
 writes to his chiefs, the Khán, and Faghánísh, vii, 337  
 marches from Madá'in, vii, 337  
 goes to Gurgán, vii, 337  
 receives embassy from the Khán, vii, 339  
 holds a court, vii, 340  
 displays his prowess before the assembly, vii, 341  
 dismisses the Khán's envoy with a letter, vii, 344  
 Khán's offer of affinity to, vii, 347  
 reply of, vii, 349  
 occupies territory evacuated by the Khán, vii, 358  
 Haitálíans and others bring gifts to, vii, 360, 362  
 gives praise to God, vii, 361

Núshírwán, receives the tribute from Rúm, vii, 362  
 goes to the temple of Ázar-gashasp, vii, 363  
 greatness of, vii, 364  
 questions Búzurjmíhr, vii, 367 *seq.*  
 receives the game of chess from Hind, vii, 380, 385  
 Rája of Hind's embassy to, vii, 384  
 rewards Búzurjmíhr for discovering how to play chess, vii, 388  
 sends Búzurjmíhr with presents and the game of nard to Hind, vii, 390  
 proposes wager with the Rája, vii, 391  
 welcomes Búzurjmíhr on his return from Hind, vii, 393  
 acquires the Book of Kalíla and Dimna, vii, 423 *seq.*  
 sends gifts to the Rája, vii, 425  
 rewards Barzwí, vii, 429  
 precautions of, as to successor, viii, 3  
 goes hunting with Búzurjmíhr, viii, 4  
 suspects and disgraces Búzurjmíhr, viii, 5  
 treats Búzurjmíhr with increasing rigour, viii, 7, 8  
 reconciled to Búzurjmíhr, viii, 9  
 questioned by archimages, viii, 14 *seq.*, 28 *seq.*  
 gives judgment against his own son, viii, 16  
 chief cook of, aggrieved, viii, 18  
 counsels Hurmuzd, viii, 25 *seq.*  
 writes to console Caesar's son and successor, viii, 43  
 wroth at answer received, viii, 45  
 invades Rúm, viii, 46

Núshírwán, success of, viii, 47  
 checked, viii, 47  
 in want of money, viii, 47  
 takes counsel with Búzurj-  
 mihr, viii, 47  
 refuses advances from a  
 shoemaker, viii, 50, 71  
 high esteem of, for scribes,  
 viii, 50  
 grants peace to, and takes  
 tribute from, the Rûmans,  
 viii, 52  
 returns to Taisafûn, viii, 53  
 sons of, viii, 56, 63  
 instructs Búzurjmihr to  
 prove Hurmuzd, viii, 56  
*seq.*  
 testament of, in favour of,  
 and last counsels to,  
 Hurmuzd, viii, 61 *seq.*; ix,  
 22  
 directions of, as to inter-  
 ment, viii, 65  
 hall of, shattered, viii, 68  
 death of, viii, 69, 71  
 system of administration of,  
 viii, 71  
 ministers of, put to death by  
 Hurmuzd, viii, 81 *seq.*  
 choice of Hurmuzd by, story  
 of, viii, 87  
 palace of, viii, 193  
 dream of, ix, 92  
 Núsh Zád=Míhr-i-Núsh, *q.v.*,  
 v. 285 and *note*  
 Núshzád, father of Mihrak,  
 vi, 237, 241, 267, 270,  
 273  
 Núshzád, son of Núshírwán,  
 167, vii, 213, 265, *seq.*  
 historical account of, vii, 219  
 Firdausi's account of, vii,  
 263 *seq.*  
 education of, vii, 263  
 imprisonment of, vii, 264  
 hears report of Núshírwán's  
 death, vii, 265  
 revolts, vii, 266  
 helped by his mother, vii,  
 266  
 writes to Caesar, vii, 266

Núshzád, goes to fight with Rám  
 Baizín, vii, 272  
 exhorted to yield by Pírúz,  
 vii, 273  
 reply of, to Pírúz, vii, 274  
 wounded, vii, 275  
 repents, vii, 275  
 sends message to his mother,  
 vii, 275  
 dies, vii, 275  
 lamentation for, vii, 276  
 Firdausi's reflections on, vii,  
 276

## O

OASIS OF AMMON, vi, 65  
 Alexander the Great's visit  
 to, vi, 65  
 Oblivion, Castle of, vii, 184  
 Obsequies, military, in the time  
 of Núshírwán, vii, 252  
 Oceanus, Homeric and Oriental,  
 i, 71  
 Odatis, Scythian princess, iv, 315  
 legend of, iv, 315  
 Odenathus, Arab chief, vi, 222  
 Shápúr son of Ardshír and,  
 vi, 294, 325  
 confused with Valerian, vi,  
 324 *seq.*  
 Odorico, Minorite Friar and tra-  
 veller (A.D. 1286-1331),  
 vi, 13  
 Old Man of the Mountain, the, v,  
 30  
 Olives, taxes on, vii, 215, 225  
 Olympias (Náhid, Halai?), wife  
 of Philip of Macedon and  
 mother of Alexander the  
 Great  
 legendary relations of, with  
 Nectanebus, vi, 16, 18  
 choice by, of name for her  
 son, vi, 19  
 intrigues of, vi, 82  
 Omartes, Scythian chief, iv, 315  
 legend of, iv, 315  
 Omen, ii, 192, v, 177  
 of the quince, ix, 13, 14

- Omphis, Indian king, vi, 62  
 Onager, the div Akwán as, iii, 273 *seq.*  
   Bahráam Chúbína guided by, viii, 156, 158  
 Onesicritus, chief pilot of Alexander the Great and writer, vi, 67  
   untrustworthy, vi, 12, 61, 67  
   Fakírs and, vi, 61  
   Calanus and, vi, 61  
   Mandanes and, vi, 61  
 Onnes, minister of Ninus, v, 292, 293  
 Ordeal by fire, ii, 218 *seq.*  
 Ormus (Hurmuz), city on the Persian Gulf, vi, 204  
 Osrhoene, kingdom in northern Mesopotamia, vi, 198  
 Othello, play of, quoted, vi, 324  
 Owls, Mas'údi's apologue of the, vi, 310  
   and Crows, story of, viii, 263 and *note*  
 Ox, the first, i, 5  
   legend of the, i, 117, 236  
 Ox of Kai Káuś, ii, 26  
 Ox-hide, or skin, filled with gold as tribute, v, 265 and *note*; vii, 262, 363; viii, 46, 52, 53  
 Oxus (Jihún, *q.v.*), river, i, 57; ii, 190; v, 12, 29, ; vii, 156, 317; viii, 72  
   ancient trade-route, i, 57  
   confused with Aras, i, 71, 370  
   change in course of, i, 57 *note*, iii, 10  
   referred to, ix, 117 and *note*, 118  
 Oxyartes, father of Roxana (Rúshanak), wife of Alexander the Great, vi, 32

## P

- Padashkvár, a mountain or section of the Alburz range, i, 338

- Page, of Núshírwán, viii, 5 *seq.*  
   relative of Búzurjmihr, viii, 5  
   instructed by Búzurjmihr, viii, 6  
   takes messages between Núshírwán and Búzurjmihr, viii, 6 *seq.*  
 Pahlav, region, ii, 77, 102; iii, 222  
 Pahlaván, i, 83; vi, 194  
 Pahlavi, middle Persian language of Ashkánian (Parthian) and Sásánian times, vii, 6, 113, 188, 380 *seq.*; viii, 73, 74; ix, 50  
   meaning of, i, 64, 83  
   Firdausi's use of the word, i, 69  
   Fables of Bidpai translated into, vii, 382  
   language (middle Persian), v, 24, 26, vi, 194  
   texts, ii, 27; v, 13, 14, 24, 30, ; vi, 195, 196, 257  
   version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes, vi, 14, 16, 84  
   writing and reading, confusion in, vi, 14, 62, 205, 206  
 Paidáwasi, Persian coin=five dínárs, vii, 95 and *note*, viii, 381 and *note*; ix, 19  
 Paighú=Túránian, v, 13, 21 *note*, 38 *note*, 41 *note*, 44 *note*; viii, 190  
 Paikár-i-Gurd, melody, viii, 398 and *note*  
 Pairika. *See* Parí.  
 Palace of Jewels, 160  
 Paladins, 154  
 Paláshán, Túránian hero, 147, iii, 26, 79  
   surveys the Íránian host, iii, 69  
   slain by Bízhan, iii, 70  
 Pálawína (Cappadocia), vi, 294, 297, 298  
 Palestine, vi, 30

- Palladius, bishop, vi, 61, 62  
treatise of, on the Brah-  
mans, vi, 61  
interpolated into the  
Pseudo-Callisthenes, vi,  
61
- Palmyra, city in Syrian desert,  
vi, 294, 322, 324; vii, 217
- Palus Macotis (Sea of Azoff), vi,  
73
- Pándavas, the five, iv, 138, 139  
pilgrimage of, compared  
with that of Kai Khusrau  
and his paladins, iv, 138
- Pand Námah, of Moola Firooz, i,  
201 *note*
- Pandnámak-i Vadshórg-Mitró-i  
Búkhtakán, Pahlaví text,  
vii, 279
- Pándu, Indian king, iv, 316
- Pápak, Tribal King, 160, vi, 3,  
194, 195, 198 *seq.*, 211  
*note* and *seq.*, 227, 252,  
254, 256; viii, 214, 219  
and *note*, 285
- Sásán and, vi, 212  
daughter of, marries Sásán,  
160, vi, 213  
mother of Ardshír Pápa-  
kán, viii, 214
- Ardawán's letter to, vi, 214  
dies, vi, 218  
kindred of, support Ardshír  
Pápakán, vi, 223 *seq.*
- Pápakán Ardshír. *See* Ardshír  
Pápakán.
- Parable, Mazdak's, vii, 201
- Paradise Lost* referred to, vi, 71
- Parí, i, 83, 172
- Paris, city, MSS. of the Pseudo-  
Callisthenes in National  
Library at, vi, 14
- Parmúda (*see too* Khán of Chín),  
170, 171, viii, 75, 117, 130,  
136 *seq.*, 146, 149 *seq.*, 164,  
174  
hears of Bahrám Chúbína's  
victory and takes counsel,  
viii, 131  
marches toward Jihún, viii,  
131
- Parmúda, approaches Balkh,  
viii, 134  
attacks and is defeated by  
Bahrám Chúbína, viii,  
134 *seq.*  
escapes to Áwáza, viii, 138  
besieged by Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 138 *seq.*  
negotiates surrender of  
Áwáza with Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 139 *seq.*  
surrenders Áwáza and sets  
out for Írán, viii, 143  
insulted by Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 144  
Bahrám Chúbína tries to  
placate, viii, 145
- Párs (Persis, Fársistán), country  
on the eastern shores of  
the Persian Gulf, 142, 153,  
160, i, 351, 353, *seq.*, 357,  
368, 371; ii, 23, 28, 76,  
101, 226, 275, 286, 362,  
410; iv, 146, 256, 269,  
270, 318; v, 293; vi, 17,  
25, 32 *note*, 37, 45, 115,  
119, 194 and *passim*; vii,  
86, 90, 95, 190, 194, 201,  
206, 214, 224; viii, 109  
*note*, 112, 216, 241, 393,  
395; ix, 68  
corpse of Darius Codomanus  
sent to, vi, 33  
Ardshír Pápakán flees to, vi,  
220  
marches from, against Ar-  
dawán, vi, 227  
returns to, vi, 229  
Íránians, after the death of  
Yazdagird son of Shápúr,  
meet to consult in, vi, 394
- Parsís, ix, 64
- Part Kings. *See* Tribal Kings.
- Parthia, kingdom, v, 10  
Hystaspes governor of, v,  
10
- Parthian, Parthians, i 10, 60, 64;  
vi, 203, 256, 322; vii, 156;  
viii, 73  
conquest of Írán by, i, 19  
Zoroastrianism under, i, 63



- Parthian, dynasty, iii, 9, 11 ; v, 281 ; vi, 194, 201  
 uses the title of King of kings, vi, 197  
 Great King, vi, 198  
 history, events of, reproduced in distorted form in Sháhnáma, iii, 11  
 kingdom, ii, 80  
 Parwíz, Iránian chief, vi, 394  
 Parwíz, meaning of, viii, 187.  
*See too* Khusrau Parwíz.
- Pashan (Ládan), battle of, iii, 15, 80, 89 ; iv, 27, 36, 42, 90, 206 ; viii, 397 and *note*
- Pashang, father of Minúchihr, i, 90 ; iii, 25 (?) ; iv, 136, marries daughter of Íraj ; i, 205
- Pashang, ruler of Túrán and father of Afrásiyáb, 142 ; i, 92, 336, 337 ; ii, 11, 13, 18, 20, 21, 297, 401 ; i.1, 15 ; iv, 78, 136, 151, 174, 222, 266, 289  
 consults his chiefs as to war with Írán, i, 342  
 bids Afrásiyáb invade Írán, i, 343, 375  
 advised by Ighríras not to make war, i, 344  
 overrules Ighríras, i, 344  
 Afrásiyáb's letter to, i, 346  
 wrath with Afrásiyáb, i, 374
- Pashang (Shída, *q.v.*), son of Afrásiyáb, i, 92 ; iii, 15
- Pashín, son of Kai Kubád. *See* Kai Pashín.
- Pashín, Iránian noble, vi, 408
- Patashwárgar, region, vi, 202 and *note*
- Pát-khusrau, brother of Gush-tásp, v, 26
- Patrician, iv, 348
- Patrons of Firdausi, i, 29
- Pauravas, Indian race and dynasty, vi, 31
- Paurúshasp. *See* Pourushaspa.
- Perfumes invention of, i, 133
- Periods, mythic and historic, of Sháhnáma, i, 49, 53
- Perozes (Pírúz), Sásánian king, vii, 159
- Persepolis (Istakhr), city in Párs, vi, 31, 32 *note*, 373 ; ix, 65  
 buildings at, attributed to Humái, v, 293  
 Zoroastrian scriptures said to have been burnt at, i, 63
- Persia, i, 308 ; ii, 191 ; iii, 109, 128 ; iv, 8 ; v, 306 *note* ; vi, 61, 278 ; vii, 118, 129, 381 ; viii, 195 ; ix, 66  
 Chess brought to, vi, 201 ; vii, 280, 284 *seq.*  
 Fables of Bidpai brought to, vii, 213, 423 *seq.*
- Persian, Persians, i, 6, 8 *seq.*, 73, 74 ; ii, 190 ; v, 74 ; vi, 30, 44, 45, 81, 143, 148, 157, 170, 201 and *passim*  
 bard, quoted, vii, 265  
 dispute with the Rúmans over Sikandar's burial, vi, 184  
 empire, ii, 9 ; vi, 197, ix, 65  
 war of, with Rúm, viii, 41  
 history and legend in relation to Greek history and legend, ii, 9  
 language, vi, 147, 205 ; vii, 134, 140, 143, 430 ; ix, 12, 65  
 monks introduce the silk-worm into Europe, vi, 204  
 mutilation of captives, vi, 323, 334, 348, 357, 404  
 sea or gulf, vi, 204, 205, ix, 66, 68  
 swords, vii, 135  
 wisdom-literature, vii, 278 *seq.*, viii, 3  
 verse, vii, 383  
 Fables of Bidpai translated into, vii, 383  
 conquest of Yaman, viii, 24 *note*  
 raid Syria, viii, 41

- Persian, Persians, defeat by  
Romans referred to, vii,  
72  
war with Turks, viii, 72  
Book of Kings, vii, 73  
Tabarí. *See* Tabarí.  
=Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 113  
=Hurmuzd, viii, 116, 117  
prince=Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 319  
ideas on marriage, ix, 7  
=Ashtád and Kharrád, ix,  
24  
exonerate Shúrín, ix, 38  
win 'The Battle of the  
Bridge,' ix, 67  
fail in attack on Híra, ix, 67  
defeat of, at Kádísíya, ix,  
67, 84  
Jalúlá, ix, 68  
Nahávand, ix, 69  
Shu'ba Mughíra's embassy  
to, ix, 69  
robes, ix, 94  
transcribe Sháhnáma for  
Firdausí, ix, 121  
*Persica*, of Ktesias, v, 293  
Persis (Párs, Fársistán), vi, 195  
Peshó-tanu (Bishútán *q.v.*), v,  
12  
Pestilence, in reign of Kubád, ix,  
3, 7  
Petroleum, in ancient cult and  
modern industry, i, 56 *seq.*  
Pharasmanes, King of Khárazm,  
vi, 72  
Philip II of Macedon, (Faiakús,  
B.C. 382-336), father of  
Alexander the Great, i,  
55 *note*, vi, 16, 29  
Nectanebus and, story of,  
vi, 18  
names his son Alexander,  
vi, 19  
Philon, Macedonian noble, vi, 76  
Philosophers, Greek, enter-  
tained by Núshirwán, vii,  
280  
Phocas, Eastern Roman Em-  
peror, viii, 187, 189, 193,  
194  
Phosphor, morning star, ii, 123  
Photius, quoted, viii, 191  
Phraates II, Parthian king,  
(B.C. 138-127), ii, 80, 81  
Phraates=Farhád, iii, 11  
Phrygians, the, vi, 71  
Píl, as rhyme-word, i, 75  
Pillai, Bahrám Gúr's, vii, 92, 160,  
161, 164  
Pilsam, Túránian hero, 144, 146,  
ii, 112 *seq.*, 320, 323 *note*,  
350 *seq.*; iii, 204  
pleads for Siyáwush, ii, 315  
summons I'fán to save Far-  
angís, ii, 322  
Pírán, son of Wísa, Túránian  
hero, cousin, commander-  
in-chief, and counsellor of  
Afrásiyáb, 145, 146, 148-  
152, i, 92; ii, 3, 112, 188,  
257 *seq.*, 264, 277, 291,  
311, 315, 316, 335, 350,  
370, 377, 379 *seq.*, 397,  
398; iii, 13, 26 *note*, 39,  
42, 58, 90, 91, 98 *seq.*, 102,  
108, 120, 122, 123, 125,  
142, 149 *seq.*, 158, 160,  
161, 169, 181 *seq.*, 192, 193,  
199 *seq.*, 216 *seq.*, 222,  
227, 232, 234, 242, 252,  
253, 259, 305 *seq.*, 335 *seq.*,  
349, 350, 357; iv, 7, 10  
*seq.*, 15 *seq.*, 29 *seq.*, 36,  
38, 41, 47, 59 *seq.*, 88 *seq.*,  
93 *seq.*, 103, 106 *seq.*, 117,  
118, 129, 134, 145, 159,  
160, 162, 205, 206; viii,  
414  
character of, i, 55  
identical with Harpagus in  
legend, ii, 191  
advises Afrásiyáb to receive  
Siyáwush, ii, 253 *note* and  
*seq.*  
goes to welcome Siyáwush,  
ii, 258 *seq.*  
daughter of, 145. *See* Jaríra.  
arranges marriages for  
Siyáwush, 145, ii, 268  
*seq.*  
entertains Siyáwush, ii, 278

Pírán, offers to help Siyáwush to build Gang-dizh, ii, 278  
 prophecy of Siyáwush to, ii, 282 *seq.*  
 goes to collect tribute, ii, 285  
 visits Siyáwush, ii, 287  
 Afrásiyáb, ii, 288  
 summoned to save Farangís, ii, 322 *seq.*  
 pleads for Farangís, ii, 324  
 takes charge of Farangís, ii, 325  
 dreams of Siyáwush, ii, 325  
 protects the infant Kai Khusrau, ii, 326 *seq.*  
 advises Afrásiyáb respecting Kai Khusrau, ii, 356  
 sends Kulbád and Nastúhan to pursue Kai Khusrau, ii, 377  
 overthrown with his host by Giv, ii, 385  
 appeals to Kai Khusrau, ii, 386  
 released, ii, 387  
 describes Giv's prowess to Afrásiyáb, ii, 389  
 disgraced, ii, 390  
 retires to Khutan, ii, 390  
 appointed to oppose the Íránians, iii, 71, 79  
 marches on Giravgard to surprise the Íránians, iii, 80  
 captures the Íránians' herds, iii, 81  
 defeats the Íránians, iii, 82, 94  
 Rukhám's embassy to, iii, 87  
 grants a month's armistice to Fariburz, iii, 88  
 losses of, in battle, iii, 94  
 takes half of Káwa's standard, iii, 94  
 sends Rún to attack Bahrá, iii, 98  
 goes to see Bahrá, iii, 99  
 hears of the Íránians' retreat, iii, 105  
 informs Afrásiyáb and returns in triumph, iii, 106

Pírán, goes to Khutan, iii, 107  
 goes to oppose Tús, iii, 117  
 informs Afrásiyáb of the Íránian invasion, iii, 118  
 reinforced, iii, 118  
 joins battle with Tús, iii, 118  
 sends a warlock to bring a snowstorm on the Íránians, iii, 128  
 defeats the Íránians, iii, 131  
 takes counsel with his chiefs, iii, 133  
 pursues the Íránians, iii, 134  
 sends Lahhák and Húmán on in advance, iii, 135  
 reaches Mount Hamáwan, iii, 137  
 beleaguers the Íránians, iii, 138  
 attacked by Tús, iii, 139  
 hears of the approach of reinforcements, iii, 151  
 harangues his host, iii, 151  
 goes to meet his allies, iii, 153  
 plan of campaign of, rejected, iii, 162  
 hears of the arrival of Íránian succours, iii, 164 *seq.*  
 Rustam, iii, 174  
 takes counsel with Kámús and the chiefs, iii, 175, 182  
 attacks the Íránians, iii, 176  
 describes Rustam to Kámús, iii, 183  
 parleys with Rustam, iii, 202  
 reports to his kindred his interview with Rustam, iii, 206  
 declines Rustam's terms, iii, 217  
 retreats, iii, 231  
 counsels Afrásiyáb, iii, 253  
 urges Afrásiyáb to withdraw to Chín, iii, 265  
 city of, iii, 335  
 entertains Rustam in disguise, iii, 335  
 pursues Rustam, iii, 349  
 sent by Afrásiyáb to invade Írán, iv, 11

- Pírán, holds parley with Gív, iv, 20  
 informs Afrásiyáb, iv, 20  
 receives reinforcements, iv, 20  
 rejects Gív's overtures, iv, 21  
 occupies Kanábad, iv, 22  
 arrays his host, iv, 25  
 gives the centre to Húmán  
 iv, 25  
 left to Burjásp, iv, 26  
 right to Lahhák and  
 Farshídwad, iv, 26  
 sets scouts on the mountain-  
 top, iv, 26  
 dissuades Húmán from  
 fighting, iv, 30  
 hears of Húmán's death, iv,  
 51  
 sends Nastíhan to make a  
 night-attack, iv, 53  
 hears of Nastíhan's death,  
 iv, 55  
 attacks Gúdarz, iv, 55  
 proposes terms to Gúdarz,  
 iv, 63  
 sends Rúín with letter to  
 Gúdarz, iv, 67  
 receives Gúdarz' reply, iv, 74  
 harangues his troops and  
 prepares for battle, iv, 75  
 sends messenger to Afrá-  
 siyáb, iv, 75  
 receives Afrásiyáb's reply,  
 iv, 80  
 becomes despondent, iv, 81,  
 98  
 sends Lahhák and Far-  
 shídwad to take the  
 Írániáns in flank, iv, 82  
 fights with Gív, iv, 84  
 appeals to Lahhák and  
 Farshídwad for help, iv,  
 85  
 announces the proposed  
 Battle of Eleven Rukhs,  
 iv, 94  
 gives the chief command to  
 Lahhák and Farshídwad,  
 iv, 94
- Pírán, instructs them, iv, 95  
 holds a parley with Gúdarz  
 and arranges with him  
 the Battle of the Eleven  
 Rukhs, iv, 95 *seq.*  
 steed of, slain by Gúdarz,  
 iv, 107  
 falls under his steed and is  
 injured, iv, 107  
 flees from Gúdarz, iv, 107  
 refuses to surrender, iv,  
 108  
 wounds Gúdarz, iv, 108  
 slain by Gúdarz, iv, 109  
 lamented for by Lahhák  
 and Farshídwad, iv, 112  
 Kai Khusráu, iv, 127  
 buried with the Túránian  
 champions by Kai Khus-  
 rau, iv, 128  
 death of, announced to  
 Afrásiyáb, iv, 151  
 treasures of, taken pos-  
 session of by Afrásiyáb, iv,  
 219
- Pírúz (Perozes), Sháh, 166, vi, 3 ;  
 vii, 4, 153, 178 *seq.*, 335,  
 359 ; viii, 73, 75, 168,  
 242, 245, 267, 285  
 passed over in the succes-  
 sion by Yazdagird, vii,  
 155  
 helped by the Haitáliáns,  
 vii, 156, 157  
 defeats Hurmuz, vii, 157  
 Hurmuz pardoned by, vii,  
 156, 158  
 Reign of, 166, vii, 159 *seq.*  
 Note on, vii, 159 *seq.*  
 calamities of, vii, 159  
 title of, vii, 159  
 relic of, vii, 159  
 measures of, against drought  
 vii, 159, 162  
 cities of, vii, 159, 163  
 expedition of, against the  
 Haitáliáns, vii, 159, 164  
*seq.*  
 tradition of, vii, 160  
 in mythical story, vii,  
 161

- Pírúz (Perozes), Bahrá́m Gúr's pillar said to have been moved by, vii, 161  
 daughter of, taken prisoner, vii, 161  
 child of, the wife of Kubád, vii, 161, 184  
 accession of, vii, 161  
 advances against Khúsh-nawáz, vii, 164  
 gives the van to Hurmuz, vii, 164  
 gives the rear to Kubád, vii, 164  
 gives the regency to Balásh, vii, 164  
 makes Súfarai (Sarkhán) minister to Balásh, vii, 164 and *note*  
 replies to the appeal of Khúshnawáz, vii, 165, 167  
 defeated by Khúshnawáz, vii, 168  
 death of, vii, 168  
 Íránian tradition of the revenge for, vii, 170  
 Súfarai determines to avenge, vii, 173  
 Pírúz, Íránian chief, vii, 85  
 Pírúz, Íránian general, vii, 187  
 Pírúz, Íránian warrior, vii, 219, 273 *seq.*  
 exhorts Núshzád to yield, vii, 273  
 Pírúz, father of Ustád, viii, 296  
 Pírúz, son of Khusrau, minister of Ardshír son of Shírwí, 175  
 appointed general, ix, 44  
 letter of Guráz to, ix, 46  
 takes counsel, ix, 46  
 writes to Guráz, ix, 47  
 Guráz marches against, ix, 48  
 appeals to Tukhár, ix, 48  
 feasts with Ardshír, ix, 48  
 informs Guráz of the death of Ardshír, ix, 51  
 put to death, ix, 57  
 Pírúz, Íránian prince, ix, 59  
 Pírúz, son of Shápúr, Íránian noble, takes Rustam's letter to Sa'ad, ix, 80, 81  
 Pírúzán, Persian general, commands Persian forces at Nahávand, ix, 68  
 slain, ix, 69  
 Pírúz-Rám (Rám-Pírúz), city built by Pírúz, 166, vii, 159, 163  
 Pírúz Shápúr (Ambar *q.v.*), vi, 327, 357  
 Pisces, constellation, i, 310 and *note*; ii, 407; iii, 26, 159, 318; iv, 364; vi, 395; vii, 245; viii, 51, 342; ix, 71  
 Pishdádian, Pishdádians, i, 116, 373; vii, 161, 171  
 Dynasty, i, 49, 115 *seq.*, 122; ii, 9, 336; iii, 9, 13; vi, 194  
 Plague. *See* Pestilence.  
 Planets, the seven, vi, 206; vii, 408  
 created by Áhriman, i, 52  
 evil influence of, i, 52  
 symbolized in the game of nard, vii, 382  
 Plato (Falátún), Greek philosopher (B.C. 427-347), vii, 100 *note*  
 Planisphere, ii, 215, 216  
 Pleiads, Pleiades, i, 114, 205, 244, 245, 267, 332; ii, 148, 282, 394, 408; iv, 183, 245, 329; v, 110, 131; vi, 169, 57, 118, 143, 365; viii, 53, 158  
 Plutarch, Greek writer (A.D. 46-120), vi, 67  
 Poll-tax, vii, 215, 225  
 Polo, game of, 145, ii, 263 *seq.*, 292; iv, 349, 350; vi, 329, 379, 382; vii, 57, 118, 143, 235; viii, 246, 247, 258, 371; ix, 16  
 episode in Kárnámak and Sháhnáma, vi, 196, 257, 263, 271  
 -stick, ii, 292; iv, 350; vi, 271, 272; vii, 118; viii, 247

- Porus (Púr q.v.), Indian king,  
     vi, 17, 62 *seq.*, 66, 76, 83  
     son of, vi, 18, 63  
     Darius' letter to, vi, 31  
     origin of name of, vi, 31  
     kingdom of, vi, 31  
     Alexander and, historical  
         account of, vi, 63  
         in the Pseudo-Callisthe-  
             nes, vi, 64, 67  
     statue of, vi, 64  
     nephew of, vi, 80  
 Pourushaspa, father of Zai-  
     duhsht (Zoroaster), ii, 9;  
     v, 14, 15, 17  
 Prefatory Note, vii, v  
 Prelate, *or* bishop q.v., iv, 341,  
     348; vi, 184  
     as militarist, iv, 197; v,  
     306; vi, 124; viii, 47  
     and *note*  
 Prelude, to Sháhnáma, i, 99 *seq.*  
     Kai Káús, ii, 29  
     Suhráb, ii, 119  
     Siyáwush, ii, 191  
     Kai Khusráu, iii, 15  
     Farúđ, iii, 37  
     Kámús, iii, 110  
     Akwán, iii, 272  
     Bízhan and Manúzha, iii, 287  
     Battle of the Twelve Rukhs,  
         iv, 9  
     Rustam and Shaghád, v, 261  
     Núshírwán, vii, 220  
     Hurmuzd, viii, 77  
 Presbyter, iv, 348  
 Prithá, Indian princess, iv, 316  
 Procopius, Byzantine historian  
     (6th century A.D.), vii, 187  
 Prometheus, i, 57  
 Pronunciation, Note on, preced-  
     ing text in each volume.  
 Property-tax, remission of, 165  
 Prophet, the, Praise of, 139  
 Proverb, i, 194, 195, 197; vii,  
     185; viii, 187  
 Pseudo - Callisthenes, Greek  
     Romance of Alexander  
     the Great, ii, 9; vi,  
     30 *seq.*, 62 *seq.*, 71, 72,  
     74 *seq.*  
 Pseudo-Calisthenes, account and  
     versions of, vi, 13 *seq.*,  
     17  
     vogue of, vi, 17  
     treatise of Palladius inter-  
         polated in, vi, 61  
     Alexander and Porus in, vi,  
         64  
     historic elements in, vi, 83  
     Egyptian elements in, vi, 83  
     Persian elements in, vi, 83  
     Arabic elements in, vi, 83  
     diagram to illustrate, vi, 84  
 Ptolemy, son of Lagus, one of  
     Alexander the Great's  
     generals, king of Egypt  
     (B.C. 323-283), and his-  
     torian, vi, 12, 13, 66  
 Púlád, a dív, ii, 44, 54, 55, 64,  
     93; iii, 256; iv, 296 and  
     *note*; v, 204  
 Púlád, Íránian hero, ii, 22  
 Púlád, Túránian hero, ii, 264;  
     iii, 190, 234  
 Púládwand, Túránian hero *or*  
     dív, 149; iii, 191, 268,  
     270  
     summoned by Afrásiyáb, iii,  
         254  
     goes to help Afrásiyáb, iii,  
         255  
     takes counsel with Afrá-  
         siyáb, iii, 256  
     worsts Tús, iii, 257  
     Glv, Ruhám, and Bíz-  
         han, iii, 258  
     cleaves in twain Káwa's  
         standard, iii, 258  
     challenged by Rustam, iii,  
         259  
     overthrown by Rustam, iii,  
         264  
     withdraws with his army  
         from the field, iii, 265  
 Pun-t (Berbera q.v.), ii, 79  
 Púrándukht, Sháh, 175, v, 294;  
     vi, 3; ix, 56  
     reproaches Kubád, ix, 17  
     makes Shahránguráz prime  
         minister, ix, 56  
     True Cross and, ix, 56

Purmayá (Barmaiún), brother of Farídún, i, 90, 91; v, 261 referred to, i, 147, 165  
 Kaiánúsh and, summon the smiths to Farídún, i, 158  
 go with Farídún against Zahhák, i, 159  
 attempt to kill Farídún, i, 160  
 Pusfarrukh, ix, 50  
 Python, Apollo and the, vi, 203

## Q

QUEEN OF CHÍN (wife of the Khán), viii, 190  
 daughter of, slain by lion-ape, viii, 322  
 asks Bahrám Chúbína to avenge her daughter, viii, 324  
 steward of, plots with Khar-rád against Bahrám Chúbína viii, 335  
 daughter of, cured by Khar-rád, viii, 336  
 grants boon to Khar-rád, viii, 338  
 disgraced, viii, 344  
 Questions, Mountain of the Holy, i, 62  
 hard, vii, 102 *seq.*  
 Quince, omen of the, ix, 13, 14  
 Quintus Curtius, Roman writer (1st century A.D.), vi, 65  
 on the Amazons, vi, 72

## R

RACES, duplicate in West and East, vi, 68  
 fair-haired, vi, 73  
 Rád, ruler of Zábulistán, vii, 86  
 Ráda, Mount, ix, 91, 94  
 Rádwi, archimage  
 pleads with Máhwí for Yaz-dagird, ix, 102

Rai, city and district near Tih-rán, 174, i, 363, 366 *seq.*; ii, 23, 399; iii, 242; iv, 147, 255, 256; v, 14, 18; vi, 32, 202, 219, 229; vii, 84, 160, 184; viii, 72, 155, 166, 171, 173, 174, 189, 214, 216, 240; ix, 68, 69, 89, 95, 96  
 seat of the Magi, i, 60  
 Khár of. *See* Khár. i, 368, 374, 381  
 Ardawán's capital, vi, 201  
 Shápúr of, vii, 184, 185, 191, 192  
 seat of Arsacid power, viii, 72  
 Bahrám Chúbína goes to, viii, 306  
 Khusrau Parwíz oppresses, viii, 365  
 misery of, viii, 367  
 Gurdya delivers, viii, 368  
 Rái. *See* Rája.  
 Raibad, town, about twenty miles west of Nishápúr, and district east of the Jagatai range, in Khurásán\*, iv, 17, 22, 23, 47, 55, 76, 88, 112, 134  
 occupied by Gúdarz, iv, 16  
 arrival of Kai Khusiau at, iv, 111, 126  
 Rája (Rái) of Hind, *temp.* Luh-rásp, iv, 321; ix, 17  
*temp.* Núshírwán, 169, vii, 140  
 and *note*, 143, 424  
 proposes wager to Núshírwán, vii, 5, 385, 387  
 receives game of nard from Núshírwán, vii, 5, 381, 389 *seq.*  
 fails to discover how to play the game, vii, 392  
 pays forfeit to Núshírwán, vii, 393  
 receives Núshírwán's gifts from Barzwí, vii, 425

\* The village of Riwad to the south of the range may perhaps indicate what was once the western boundary of the district.

Rája, assists Barzví in his mission to Hind, vii, 428.

letter of, ix, 17

put in charge of Shírin, ix, 17

Rakhsh, Rustam's steed, *i. 42*, i, 386; ii, 13, 42 *seq.*, 67, 74, 94, 97, 110, 116, 139, 143, 311 354; iii, 146, 177, 186, 189, 194, 195, 223, 224, 226, 227, 229, 259, 264, 275, 276, 278, 279, 313, 324, 326, 335, 342, 344, 346 *seq.*, 350, 352; iv, 295; v, 117, 184, 192, 198, 207, 208, 214, 219, 228 *seq.*, 234 *seq.*, 266, 275 caught by Rustam, i, 378 *seq.*

described, i, 379, 380

care taken of, i, 380

slays a lion, ii, 45

encounters a dragon, ii, 48 stolen by Turkmans, ii, 121 *seq.*

sire of Shuráb's charger, ii, 128

saddled by Gfv, Ruhhám, and Túf for the fight with Suhráb, ii, 160

referred to, iii, 184, 228, 253; v, 199

wounded by Asfandiyár, v, 229

returns home without Rustam, v, 229

Rustam's thought of abandoning, v, 235

healed by the Símurgh, v, 237

tries to save Rustam, v, 270

falls into the pit, v, 270

body of, taken from pit by Farámarz, v, 275

tomb of, v, 276

lord of=Rustam, v, 306

Rakhshasas, vi, 13

Rakka (Callinicus, Káliniyús *q.v.*, Nicephorium, Warígh), city, viii, 188

Ram, personification of the Divine Grace, i, 374. *See* mountain-sheep.

Rustam's life saved by a, ii, 46

constellation, ii, 299; v, 129

Rám, Fire-temple, vi, 202, 226

Rám, Íránian warrior, viii, 291

Rám Ardshír, city, vi, 202, 290 and *note*

Rám Barzín, high priest and general, 167, vii, 275

Kubád's testament kept by, vii, 210

Núshírwán's instructions to, concerning Núshzád, vii, 267 *seq.*

goes to fight with Núshzád, vii, 272

hears of Núshzád's last wishes, vii, 276

Rám Barzín, Persian official, viii, 313

Rámbihisht, wife of Sásán, vi, 198

Rám Ilurmuz, city in Khúzistán, east of Ahwáz, vi, 199

plain of, vi, 199

Rámishn - i - Ardshír, district, vi, 202

Rám Kubád (Aragán), city, vii, 188

Rám Pírúz. *See* Pírúz Rám.

Rangwí, Íránian warrior, viii, 296

Rasafa, viii, 188

Rashnawád, captain of the host to Humái, 158

assembles troops, v, 301

Daráb enlists under, v, 301

host of, reviewed by Húmái, v, 302

marches on Rúm, v, 302 and the adventure of the ruined vault, v, 303

gives presents to Daráb, v, 304

questions Daráb, v, 304 sends for the launderer and his wife, v, 304



- Rashnawád, Dáráb and, defeat the Rûmans v, 305, 306  
praises Dáráb, v, 305, 306  
offers Dáráb the spoil, v, 306  
grants peace to Caesar, v, 307  
returns to Írán, v, 307  
hears from the launderer and his wife about the case of Dáráb, v, 308  
writes to Humái about the case of Dáráb, v, 308  
appears with Dáráb before Humái, v, 309 *seq.*
- Rás-Shápúr (Gund-i-Shápúr, *q.v.*), city, vi, 255, 256
- Ratl, weight, vi, 156 and *note*
- Raven, Raven-head, ix, 91 and *note*, 95 *note*, 96
- Ravi (Hydraotes), river in the Punjáb, vi, 64
- Rawalpindi, town and district in the Punjáb, vi, 62
- Rawlinson, Sir Henry, his account of Gotarzes' inscription at Bihistún, iii, 9
- Rawlinson, Professor, vi, 253
- Red Sea, ii, 364
- Reeds (bamboos), vi, 71  
gigantic, seen by Sikandar, vi, 148  
used in house-building, vi, 71, 148
- Religion, War of the, v, 19, 26  
two campaigns of, v, 29
- Remus, *See* Romulus.
- Reseph, viii, 188
- Responses, of Núshírwán, viii, 14 *seq.*, 28 *seq.*
- Revellers, Rosary of, ix, 38, 40
- Rhyme-words, i, 74; ii, 228  
*note*; v, 261; vi, 372;  
vii, 88 and *note*, 89 and  
*note*, 174 and *note*, 245 and  
*note*, 263 and *note*  
Firdausí and, viii, 397 *note*
- Ridge of Gushtásp, v, 29
- Rív-Ardshír, city east of the Jaráhi river near the head of the Persian Gulf, vi, 202  
referred to, vi, 224
- Rívníz, son-in-law of Tús, 147,  
iii, 11, 25, 45, 57, 60, 71  
prepares to attack Farúd,  
iii, 51  
referred to, iii, 55  
burial of, iii, 68
- Rívníz, son of Kai Káuś, ii, 3;  
iii, 14, 96, 113, 114, 232  
slain, iii, 93  
battle for crown of, iii, 94
- Rívníz, son of Zarasp, iv, 360  
Zarír and, go to Rûm, iv, 360  
hails Gushtásp as Sháh, iv, 362
- Rízmíhr (Zarmíhr), son of Súfaraí, 166, vii, 207; viii, 169  
identical with Súfaraí, vii, 185  
Kubád and, go to the Hattians, vii, 186  
fate of, vii, 186  
loyalty of, to Kubád, vii, 196  
helps Kubád to escape from prison, vii, 197  
negotiates a marriage for Kubád, vii, 197  
made chief minister, vii, 200
- Rizwán, angel, ii, 39 and *note*, 288
- Roc, mythical bird, i, 51, 235
- Roman, Romans, i, 10; iii, 286;  
vi, 254, 318, 325, 326; vii, 214; viii, 188, 189, 195;  
ix, 50, 66  
relations of, with the Íransians, i, 14  
empire, Eastern, i, 373; vi, 253  
war of, with Persian, viii, 41, 193  
Alexander's legendary visit to, vi, 30  
emperors, vi, 321, 371, 372  
neglect the defences of the Caucasus, vii, 187  
so-called tribute of, to Persia, vii, 187  
treatment of Munzir by, vii, 217  
leads to war with Núshírwán, vii, 217

- Romans, defeat Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 76
- Romance of Alexander the Great (Pseudo-Callisthenes, *q.v.*), vi, 11 *seq.*, 88
- incorporation of, in Sháh-náma, vi, 16
- vogue of, vi, 17
- sources of marvels in, vi, 12, 60
- diagram to illustrate, vi, 84
- Rome, vi, 194, 197, 203, 301, 324
- Shápúr son of Ardshír's wars with, vi, 294, 297
- Bahrám Gúr's war with, vi, 373
- Romulus and Remus, founding legend of, v, 293
- Rook, piece in chess. *See* Rukh.
- Rosary of Revellers, ix, 38, 40
- Roxana (Rúshanak, *q.v.*), vi, 33
- Alexander and, vi, 30
- account of, vi, 32
- Rúdába, daughter of Mihráb king of Kábul, wife of Zál, and mother of Rustam, 141, 157, i, 145, 299: ii, 44, 180; v, 182, 184, 190 *note*
- Story of Zál and, i, 256 *seq.* referred to, iii, 285
- Zál hears of, i, 257
- description of, i, 257, 259, 264, 266, 272
- hears of Zál, i, 260
- falls in love with Zál, i, 260
- handmaids of, go in quest of Zál, i, 263
- interview Zál, i, 266
- invite Zál to visit Rúdába, i, 267
- reproached by the porter, i, 267
- describe Zál, i, 268
- prepares to receive Zál, i, 269
- entertains, and plights her troth to, Zál, i, 272
- Zál consults the archimages on the matter of, i, 273
- Rúdába, go-between of, with Zál, i, 280
- Zál sends Sám's letter to, i, 280
- rewards her go-between, i, 281
- go between of, discovered by Sindukht, i, 281
- reproached by her parents, i, 282, 287
- congratulated by Sindukht, i, 315
- seen and admired by Sám, i, 318
- married to Zál, i, 318
- Zál and, go to Sístán, i, 319
- grievous travail of, i, 320
- saved by the Símurgh, i, 321
- Caesarean operation performed upon, i, 322
- gives birth to Rustam, i, 322
- fasts in sorrow for Rustam, v, 278
- frenzy of, v, 278
- regains her wits, v, 279
- referred to, v, 190, 289
- lamentation of, v, 289
- Rúdagí, Persian poet, versifies the Fables of Bidpai, vii, 383, 431
- Rúdbár, district, v, 30
- Rúdyáb, father of Pápak (in Sháh-náma), vi, 200, 212
- Rue, wild, as a prophylactic, i, 380
- Ruhlám, son of Gúdarz, Íránian hero, ii, 4, 62, 73, 144, 158, 340; iii, 19, 33, 48, 67, 115, 126 *seq.*, 139 *seq.*, 154, 157, 182, 187, 211, 248, 259, 264, 268, 273, 322, 350, 352; iv, 13, 15, 21, 31, 37, 147; vii, 156
- helps to saddle Rakhsh for the fight with Suhráb, ii, 160
- mortally wounds Farúd, iii, 64
- embassy of, to Pirán, iii, 87
- attacks Bázúr, iii, 128

- Ruhhám, worsted by Ashkabús, iii, 179  
 goes to the help of Rustam, iii, 227  
 worsted by Púládwand, iii, 258  
 goes with Rustam to rescue Bízhan, iii, 334  
 commands the left wing, iv, 24  
 superseded *pro tem*, by Farhád, iv, 92  
 chosen to fight with Bármán iv, 97  
 slays Bármán, iv, 102  
 sent by Gúdarz to fetch Pírán's corpse, iv, 110  
 acts as Kai Khusráu's standard-bearer in his combat with Shída, iv, 171  
 protests against Kai Khusráu's fighting on foot with Shída, iv, 174  
 holds Kai Khusráu's steed, iv, 175  
 instructed by Kai Khusráu to bury Shída, iv, 176  
 Kai Khusráu remonstrated with by, and other nobles for refusing audience, iv, 275
- Ruhhám, king of Rai, *temp.* Bahrám Gúr, vii, 85
- Ruhhám, Íránian warrior, vii, 156.  
 helps Pírúz to gain the throne, vii, 156, 186; viii, 73
- Rúin, son of Pírán, 151, i, 92; iii, 207, 234; iv, 10, 71, 90, 102, 152, 153, 162  
 summons Pírán to save Farangís, ii, 323 and *note*  
 sent by Pírán to attack Bahrám, iii, 98  
 wounded by Bahrám, iii, 99  
 put in command of ambush, iv, 26  
 bears letter from Pírán to Gúdarz, iv, 67
- Rúin, entertained by Gúdarz, iv, 68  
 returns to Pírán with Gúdarz' reply, iv, 74  
 goes to help Pírán against Gív and is defeated, iv, 84  
 chosen to fight with Bízhan, iv, 97  
 slain by Bízhan, iv, 103
- Rúina, place, ix, 91
- Rukh, piece in chess (castle), vii, 385, 423  
 position of, iv, 8; vii, 388, 422  
 move of, iv, 8; vii, 422
- Rukhs, Battle of the Twelve, 151; iv, 7 *seq.*  
 meaning of, iv, 7  
 Battle of the Eleven, 151, iv, 88  
 arranged by Gúdarz and Pírán, iv, 95 *seq.*  
 Firdaus's reflections on, iv, 7, 98, 106  
 referred to, v, 29; vii, 156
- Rúm, the Eastern Roman Empire, 154, 158, 162, 167, 172, 173, i, 15, 229; ii, 143, 297, 307, 360; iii, 106, 151, 164, 296; iv, 14, 133, 148, 196, 197, 208, 272, 312, 314, 316, 317, 323 *seq.*, 330, 331, 333 *seq.*, 339, 341 *seq.*, 345, 348, 349, 352, 353, 355, 356, 359, 361, 364; v, 75, 76, 102, 180, 188, 262, 301, 305; vi, 40, 41, 45, 51, 53, 81, 94, 104, 113 *seq.*, and *passim*  
 king of = Mahmúd, i, 113  
 = Sikandar, vi, 172  
 West and, Salm's portion, i, 189  
 brocade of, i, 157, 183, 210, 252, 263, 316 and *passim*; iii, 26, 235, 291, 297, 355; iv, 128, 271, 364; v, 295; vi, 56, 89; vii, 64, 67, 276, 384; viii, 157, 173, 278, 337, 367, 374; ix, 99, 101

Rúm, helm of, iii, 114  
 sea of, iii, 177  
 city in, founded by Salm, iv, 325  
 ravaged by Rashnawád and Dáráb, v, 307  
 ambassadors from, come to Dáráb, vi, 21  
 Dáráb wars with, vi, 22  
 prince of, vi, 22  
 chiefs of, vi, 23, 153  
   withdraw on Dáráb's approach, vi, 23  
 tribute of, to Írán, vi, 24  
   explained, vii, 187  
 ambassadors from, come to Dárá, vi, 35  
 reed (pen) of, vi, 85  
 stuffs of, vi, 143  
 philosophers of, vi, 115, 154; viii, 279, 382  
 cavaliers of, vi, 167  
 Sháh of=Sikandar, vi, 170  
 Sikandar's policy to safeguard, vi, 178  
 Arastáls' advice to Sikandar concerning, vi, 179  
 invaded by Shápúr, vi, 350  
 slave-girls of, chosen by Bahrám Gúí, vi, 382  
 Bahrám Gúr's war with, vii, 4, 5, 84  
 Núshírwán's wars with, vii, 213  
 robes of, viii, 308  
 captured cities of, restored to, viii, 312  
 monks of, slain by Máhwi, ix, 113  
 Rúman, Rúmans, 154, 158, 162, 167, 172, 173, iii, 309; iv, 357, 360, 363; v, 173, 205, 292; vi, 44, 45, 101 *seq.*, 113, 114, 127, 142, 148, 168, 170, 179 *seq.*, and *passim*  
 slaves, i, 252; vi, 382; vii, 54, 259  
 invade Írán, v, 301  
 defeated by Rashnawád and Dáráb, v, 305 *seq.*

Rúman, Rúmans, king of=Philip of Macedon, vi, 19  
 carry out works in Írán, vi, 21  
 =Sikandar, vi, 50, 52, 154  
 Íránians ask quarter of, vi, 51  
 tongue, vi, 160; vii, 256, 261  
 dispute with the Persians as to Sikandar's burial, vi, 184  
 sages, vi, 185  
   their sentences over the coffin of Sikandar, vi, 1, 85, *seq.*  
 silk, vi, 280.; vii, 424  
 defeated by Shápúr, son of Ardshír, vi, 297  
 engineers build bridge at Shúshtar, vi, 299  
 astrologic tablets, vi, 376  
 eunuchs, vii, 67.; viii, 279  
 pen, vii, 73  
 helmet, vii, 89, 272, 274  
 bishop, vii, 275, 276  
 envoy, viii, 8 *seq.*  
 surrender to Núshírwán, viii, 47  
 entrench themselves, viii, 47  
 sue for peace and pay tribute viii, 51 *seq.*  
 architect, viii, 193, 401  
 marches, viii, 252  
 robes, viii, 253  
 helms, viii, 105, 276, 417  
 worsted by Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 292  
 artificers imprisoned by Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 402  
   released by Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 403  
 Rúmiya (New Antioch, Sársán *q.v.*), a suburb of Ctesiphon (Taisafún) on the east bank of the Tigris, vii, 218  
 Rús (Russia), vi, 19; viii, 406  
 king of, vi, 22

Rúshanak (Roxana, *q.v.*), daughter of Dárá (in Sháh-náma) and wife of Sikandar, 158, 159, ii, 3; vi, 86 *seq.*, 188  
 account of, vi, 32  
 derivation of, vi, 33  
 bestowed by Dárá on Sikan-dar, vi, 55  
 son of, vi, 81, 181  
 visited by Náhíd, vi, 89  
 married to Sikandar, vi, 90  
 reference in Sikandar's Will, to, vi, 181  
 Rúshan Pírúz, city, vii, 160  
 Russia, vi, 19  
 Russian, Russians, vi, 19  
   empire, vi, 19  
   foundation of, vi, 19  
   cloth, ix, 110  
 Rustan, son of Zál, Iránian national hero, 141-150, 153, 154, 156, 157, i, 42, 68, 90, 174, 235 *seq.*, 376 *seq.*; ii, 4, 18, 25, 34, 35, 42 *seq.*, 79, 92 *seq.*, 188, 236, 237, 271, 286, 290, 311, 316, 318, 319, 335, 344 *seq.*, 349 *seq.*, 371, 372, 380, 394, 400; iii, 24, 35, 36, 40, 107 *seq.*, 121, 134, 138, 141 *seq.*, 155, 164 *seq.*, 182 *seq.*, 294, 307, 308; iv 11, 13, 27, 30, 65, 157, 167, 172, 198, 226, 227, 277, 285, 289, 292, 319, 324; v, 9, 22, 30, 50, 73, 86, 165, 254 *seq.*, 278, 279, 281, *seq.*, 298; vi, 325, 395; vii, 151; viii, 106, 177, 219, 223, 332; ix, 25  
 Caesarean birth of, i, 236, 321 *seq.*  
   account of, in Moses of Chorene, i, 236  
   presage of, by the astrologers, i, 278, 307  
   Simurgh, i, 321  
   origin of name, i, 322 and *note*  
   effigy of, sent to Salm, i, 322  
   nurturing of, i, 324

Rustam, goes with Zál and Míhrát to meet Sám, i, 325  
 slays the white elephant, i, 327, 377  
 bidden by Zál to take Mount Sipand, i, 329  
 takes Mount Sipand, i, 331, 377  
 sends the Spoil to Zál, i, 333  
 sets fire to Mount Sipand, i, 333  
 bidden by Zál to prepare for war, i, 376  
 reply of, i, 376  
 Zál gives Sám's mace to, i, 378  
 obtains Rakhsh, i, 378  
 goes in quest of Kai Kulád, i, 382 *seq.*  
 slays Kulún, i, 386  
 first campaign of, ii, 11 *seq.*  
 nearly takes Afrásiyáb prisoner, ii, 14, 116, 354  
 rewarded by Kai Kubád, ii, 21  
 Seven Courses of (Haft Khlwán) 143, ii, 44 *seq.*  
 life of, saved by a ram, ii, 46  
 song of, ii, 51  
 rescues Kai Káuś in Mázan-darán, ii, 58  
 handgrip of, ii, 66, 67  
 encounter of, with Kaláhúr, ii, 67  
   Juyá, ii, 71  
 audience of, with the king of Mázandarán, ii, 67 *seq.*  
 encounter of, with the king of Mázandarán, ii, 73  
 rewarded by Kai Káuś, ii, 77  
 entertains Kai Káuś, ii, 83  
 takes the king of Shám prisoner, ii, 97  
 defeats Afrásiyáb, ii, 100  
 made paladin of paladins by Kai Káuś, ii, 101  
 goes in search of Kai Káuś, ii, 104  
 takes part in the Fight of the Seven Warriors, ii, 107 *seq.*  
 slays Alkús, ii, 115

Rustam, and Suhráb, Story of, ii, 118 *seq.*  
 loses Rakhsh, ii, 121  
 Afrásiyáb's plot against, ii, 129  
 holds a drinking-bout, ii, 141  
 quarrels with Kai Káuś, ii, 142  
 reconciled by Gúdarz, ii, 144 *seq.*  
 goes in disguise to see Suhráb, ii, 149  
 adventure of, with Zhanda Razm, ii, 149 *seq.*  
 Suhráb described by, ii, 151, 166  
 encampment of, described, ii, 154  
 armed by Tús, Gíiv, and Ruhhám for his fight with Suhráb, ii, 160  
 challenges Suhráb, ii, 161  
 charge of, to Zawára, ii, 167  
 declines Suhráb's advances, ii, 169  
 saves his life by a ruse, ii, 170  
 prays that his strength may be restored, ii, 171  
 learns too late that Suhráb is his son, ii, 173  
 grief of, ii, 173 *seq.*  
 makes a truce with Húmán, ii, 176  
 tries to slay Hajír, ii, 176 himself, ii, 177  
 brings up Siyáwush, ii, 196  
 marches with him against Afrásiyáb, ii, 225, *seq.*  
 returns and quarrels with Kai Káuś, ii, 242 *seq.*  
 grief and wrath of, at the death of Siyáwush, ii, 338 *seq.*  
 puts Surkha to death, ii, 346  
 fights with the Túránians, ii, 349 *seq.*  
 appoints Tús ruler of Chách, ii, 358  
 Gúdarz ruler of Sughd and Sipanjáb, ii, 358

Rustam, daughter of, ii, 383, 384, iii, 323  
 wife of, ii, 384, iii, 323  
 hears of Kai Khusrau's arrival in Írán, ii, 395  
 Turkman occupation of Zábulistán, account of by, iii, 14  
 goes to do homage to Kai Khusrau, iii, 17  
 witnesses Kai Khusrau's oath to avenge Siyáwush, iii, 22  
 proposes to Kai Khusrau to expel Turkmans from Zábulistán, iii, 30  
 asks Kai Khusrau to pardon Tús and the Íránians in the matter of Farúd, iii, 113  
 summoned by Kai Khusrau, iii, 143  
 advocates the marriage of Fariburz and Farangís, iii, 146  
 marches to succour Tús, iii, 148  
 meets Gúdarz, iii, 171  
 takes counsel with Tús and the chiefs, iii, 172  
 arrays the host, iii, 177  
 fight of, with Ashkabús, legend about, iii, 109  
 referred to, viii, 75  
 parleys with Ashkabús, iii, 180  
 slays Ashkabús, iii, 181  
 described by Pírán, iii, 183  
 harangues the troops, iii, 186, 219, 223, 232, 235  
 challenged by Kámús, iii, 187  
 spear-bearer of, slain by Kámús, iii, 188  
 parleys with Kámús, iii, 188  
 takes Kámús prisoner, iii, 189  
 and the Khán of Chín, Story of, 149, iii, 191 *seq.*  
 referred to, iii, 193  
 slays Chingish, iii, 195

Rustam, parleys with Húmán, iii, 196  
 conditions of peace offered by, iii, 197, 205  
 parleys with Pírán, iii, 202  
 proposes peace on terms to the Íránians, iii, 211  
 warned by Gúdarz not to trust Pírán, iii, 212  
 wrath of, with Pírán, iii, 218  
 unhoises Shangul, iii, 221  
 prowess of, in battle, iii, 222 *seq.*  
 overthrows Kundur, iii, 224  
 slays Sáwa, iii, 224  
 Gahár, iii, 225  
 attacks the Khán of Chín, iii, 225, *seq.*  
 victorious, iii, 231, *seq.*  
 wroth with Tús and the Íránians, iii, 234  
 sends Faríburz to Kai Khusrau with tidings of victory, iii, 236, *seq.*  
 leads on the host, iii, 238  
 reaches Sughd, iii, 244  
 sends troops to attack Bídád, iii, 244  
 slays Káfú, iii, 245  
 besieges and storms Bídád, iii, 246  
 sends Gív to raid Khutan, iii, 247  
 praised by Gúdarz, iii, 248  
 described by Afrásiyáb, iii, 251  
 attacks the Túránians, iii, 257  
 challenges Púládward, iii, 259  
 overthrows Púládward, iii, 264  
 defeats the Túránians, iii, 266  
 divides the spoil, iii, 266  
 ravages Túrán, iii, 266  
 returns in triumph, iii, 267  
 asks Kai Khusrau's leave to return to Zál, iii, 269  
 rewarded by Kai Khusrau, iii, 269

Rustam, Story of fight of, with the dív Akwán, 149, iii, 271 *seq.*  
 summoned to court by Kai Khusrau, ii, 274  
 pursues the dív Akwán, iii, 275  
 foiled by Akwán, iii, 276  
 taken at a disadvantage by Akwán, iii, 276  
 offered a choice of deaths by Akwán, iii, 277  
 outwits Akwán, iii, 277  
 finds Rakhsh among Afrásiyáb's herds, iii, 278  
 encounters Afrásiyáb's herdsmen, iii, 279  
 defeats Afrásiyáb, iii, 280  
 slays Akwán, iii, 281  
 carries off the spoil, iii, 281  
 welcomed by Kai Khusrau, iii, 282  
 tells his adventure with Akwán, iii, 282  
 rewarded by Kai Khusrau, iii, 283  
 returns home, iii, 283  
 summoned to court in the matter of Bízhan, iii, 319 *seq.*  
 visited by Gív, iii, 322  
 promises to help Gív, iii, 324  
 goes with Gív to court, iii, 326  
 address of, to Kai Khusrau, iii, 327  
 undertakes the rescue of Bízhan, iii, 330  
 plan of, iii, 333  
 chooses his comrades, iii, 334  
 goes disguised to Túrán, iii, 335  
 gives presents to Pírán, iii, 336  
 welcomed by Pírán, iii, 336  
 opens a market, iii, 337  
 interviews of, with Manízha, iii, 337, 342

Rustam, sends food and his ring to Bízhan, iii, 340  
 removes boulder of Akwán from pit's mouth, iii, 345  
 makes conditions for release with Bízhan, iii, 345  
 releases Bízhan, iii, 346  
 arrays his troops against Afrásiyáb, iii, 350  
 mocks Afrásiyáb, iii, 351  
 defeats Afrásiyáb, iii, 352  
 triumphant return of, iii, 353  
 presents Bízhan to Kai Khusrau, iii, 354  
 rewarded by Kai Khusrau, iii, 356  
 goes to Sistán, iii, 356  
 sent to Hindústán by Kai Khusrau, iv, 14  
 successes of, iv, 60, 71  
 troops of, recalled, iv, 145  
 commands the right wing, iv, 147  
 attacks with Kai Khusrau from the centre, iv, 180  
 goes with Zawára to the right wing, iv, 180  
 sent to the desert to attack Tawurg, iv, 188  
 reports his defeat of Tawurg, iv, 193  
 advances, iv, 194  
 failure of Afrásiyáb's attempt to surprise, iv, 195  
 takes part in the siege of Gang-bihisht, iv, 199, 208 *seq.*  
 Kai Khusrau's converse with, iv, 198, 199  
 captures Jahn and Garsíwaz, iv, 210  
 advises Kai Khusrau to reject Afrásiyáb's overtures, iv, 222  
 ordered to prepare for a night-attack from Afrásiyáb, iv, 224  
 supports Kai Khusrau's proposal to pursue Afrásiyáb to Gang-dizh, iv, 231

Rustam, left by Kai Khusrau in Chin, iv, 241  
 welcomes Kai Khusrau on his return from Gang-dizh, iv, 251  
 accompanies Kai Khusrau to Siyáwushgird, iv, 252  
 summoned by the Iránians to remonstrate with Kai Khusrau, iv, 278  
 with Zál and the sages, sets forth for Irán, iv, 279  
 met on arrival by Gúdarz and other chiefs, iv, 282  
 holds converse with the Iránians, iv, 282  
 audience of, with Kai Khusrau, iv, 283 *seq.*  
 holds, with other chiefs, at the bidding of Kai Khusrau an assembly on the plain, iv, 291 *seq.*  
 Kai Khusrau's gift to, iv, 295  
 confirmed by Kai Khusrau in possession of Ním-rúz, iv, 297  
 sets out with Kai Khusrau on his pilgrimage, iv, 306  
 turns back at the bidding of Kai Khusrau, iv, 307  
 laments the loss of the paladins and returns to Irán, iv, 310  
 Zál and, welcome Gushtásp to Sistán, v, 85  
 rivalry in legend between Asfandiyár and, v, 116  
 Haft Khwán of, compared with that of Asfandiyár, v, 117  
 Asfandiyár's fight with, Story of, 156, v, 166 *seq.*  
 recited by Nadr, son of Hárith, at Mecca, v, 166  
 referred to, v, 169, 170, 306  
 Gushtásp bids Asfandiyár go against, v, 173  
 Asfandiyár's message to, v, 179



Rustam, life of, attempted by Bahman, v, 184  
 interview of, with Bahman v, 185  
 entertains Bahman, v, 186  
 great appetite of, v, 186, 210  
 jests with Bahman on his small appetite, v, 186  
 sends Zawára and Farámarz to bid Zál and Rúdába prepare to receive Asfandiyár, v, 190  
 goes to the Hírmund, v, 191  
 parleys with Asfandiyár, v, 192, *seq.*  
 invites Asfandiyár to visit him, v, 193  
 accepts Asfandiyár's invitation to a feast, v, 195  
 tells Zál, of his interview with Asfandiyár, v, 196  
 indignation of, at not being summoned to the feast, v, 197  
 sets forth to reproach Asfandiyár, v, 198  
 wrangle of, with Asfandiyár, v, 198 *seq.*  
 demands his proper seat at the feast, v, 200  
 Zál and, vilified by Asfandiyár, v, 201  
 details his ancestry, v, 202  
 recounts Sám's exploits, v, 202  
 his own exploits, v, 203, 207  
 patents of, from Kai Káuś and Kai Khusrau, v, 203  
 aged six hundred years, v, 204  
 tries a handgrip with Asfandiyár, v, 209  
 accepts Asfandiyár's challenge, v, 209  
 asks for neat wine, v, 211  
 makes fresh overtures to Asfandiyár, v, 211 *seq.*  
 addresses the royal tent-enclosure, v, 215

Rustam, bids Zawára bring him his arms, v, 218  
 rejects Zál's counsels, v, 220  
 arms for battle, v, 222  
 gives Zawára charge of the troops, v, 222  
 goes with Zawára to the Hírmund, v, 222  
 instructs Zawára, v, 222  
 crosses the Hírmund and summons Asfandiyár to the combat, v, 223  
 suggests a general engagement, v, 224  
 distress of, at the death of Núsh Ázar and Mihr-i-Núsh, v, 228  
 offers to surrender Zawára and Farámaiz to Asfandiyár, v, 228  
 wounded by Asfandiyár, v, 229  
 flees from Asfandiyár, v, 229  
 sends Zawára with a message to Zál, v, 230  
 parleys with Asfandiyár, v, 231  
 recrosses the Hírmund, v, 231  
 kin of, grieve over his wounds, v, 234  
 bids the leeches to attend to Rakhsh first, v, 234  
 despair of, v, 235  
 advised by Zál, v, 235  
 Zál summons the Símurgh to the aid of, v, 235  
 healed by the Símurgh, v, 237  
 instructed by the Símurgh how to overcome Asfandiyár, v, 237, *seq.*  
 cuts the fatal branch of tamarisk, v, 239  
 prepares the arrow, v, 240  
 summons Asfandiyár to renew the fight, v, 240  
 makes a final effort for peace with Asfandiyár, v, 241 *seq.*

- Rustam, bewails Asfandiyár to Bishútán, v, 246  
 Asfandiyár confides Bahman to, v, 248  
   foretells an evil future for, v, 248  
 laments Asfandiyár, v, 250  
 warned by Zawára against Bahman, v, 250  
 sends Asfandiyár's corpse to Gushtásp, v, 251  
 Bahman remains with, v, 252, 256  
 instructs Bahman, v, 256  
 writes to Gushtásp to excuse himself in the matter of Asfandiyár, v, 256  
 overtures of, to Gushtásp supported by Bishútán, v, 257  
 Gushtásp accepts the excuses of, and writes to, v, 257  
 requested by Gushtásp to send back Bahman, v, 258  
 equips Bahman for his journey, v, 258  
 Story of, and Shaghád, 157, v, 260 *seq.*  
   provenance of, v, 260 *seq.*  
 death of, v, 261, 273, 289  
   versions of, v, 261  
 Kábul's tribute to, question of, v, 265  
 Shaghád and the king of Kábul plot against, v, 265  
 takes up Shaghád's cause, v, 267  
 prepares to occupy Kábul with a host, v, 268  
 persuaded by Shaghád to go with Zawára and a small escort, v, 268  
 pardons king of Kábul, v, 269  
 entertained by king of Kábul, v, 269  
 goes hunting with Zawára, v, 270  
 falls a victim to treachery, v, 270
- Rustam, Shaghád, glories over, v, 271  
 slays Shaghád, v, 272  
 last words of, v, 272  
 corpse of, taken from the pit by Farámarz, v, 274  
 obsequies of, v, 274 *seq.*  
 Artabanus and, v, 282  
 burial place of, v, 287  
   scene of the battle between Bahman and Farámarz, v, 287  
 personification of the Sacae, i, 68; vi, 194  
 conduct of, in Hámávarán, viii, 104, 168  
 banner of, bestowed on Bahrám Chúbína, viii, 105, 217  
 Rustam, Persian commander in chief under Yazdagird III, 176; ix, 66, 67, 69, 73, 81 *seq.*, 90, 95  
 brother of Farrukhzád, viii, 413 and *note*  
   revolt of, viii, 413  
 overthrows Ázarmdukht, ix, 59  
 advances to Kádisiya, ix, 67, 73  
 end of, ix, 69  
 finds evil aspects in the stars ix, 73  
 writes to his brother, ix, 73  
 hears of Shu'ba Mughíra's arrival, ix, 82  
 Rúzbiḥ, Bahrám Gúr's high priest, 164, vii, 26 *seq.*, 54, 67  
   bewails Bahrám Gúr's course of life, vii, 56  
   reproached by Bahrám Gúr for his parsimony, vii, 83  
 Rúzbiḥ, scribe, viii, 252
- S
- SA'AD, son of Wakkás, Arab general, 176, ix, 67, 68, 82 *seq.*, 90

Sa'ad, succeeds Abú 'Ubaida, ix, 67

at Kádisiya, ix, 67, 69

founds Kúla, ix, 67

takes Ctesiphon, ix, 67

recalled, ix, 68

sent by 'Umar to invade Írán, ix, 72

letter of Rustam to, ix, 78

taken by Pírúz, ix, 80, 81

Sabbákh, king of Yaman, iv, 146

Sabz dar sabz, melody, viii, 399 and *note*

Sacae (Scythians), i, 17, 19

Rustam a personification of, i, 68; vi, 194

Sacaestán. *See* Sistán.

Sacrifice, human, and serpent-worship, i, 143

Sada, feast of, 140, i, 23; iv, 317; v, 309; vi, 33, 55,

230 and *note*, 245, 273,

389; vii, 11, 94, 200;

viii, 68, 133, 216, 313;

ix, 40<sup>o</sup> 92

institution of i, 124

Sáda, Íránian noble, vii, 312

Saffid Rúd, river flowing through Gílán into the Caspian,

v, 13, 16

Sagastán (Sistán *q.v.*), v, 13

Sage, sages, 159, vi, 101, 103

Indian, vi, 62

naked (Brahmans *q.v.*)

of Kaid. *See* Kaid.

saying of, viii, 155

Sagittarius, constellation, i, 188; iv, 355

Sagsár, Sagsárs, district and tribe, i, 279 and *note*, 290,

323, 339; ii, 143; iii, 152,

207

Sahadeva, one of the five Pándavas, iv, 138

referred to, iv, 139

Sahí, wife of Íraj, i, 188

referred to, i, 182 *seq.*

Sahl, son of Máhán, Íránian noble, v, 260, 261, 263

Saifu'd-Daula, title of Sultán Mahmúd, i, 21

Sakíl, son of Cæsar, *temp.* Lulhrásp, iv, 355

commands the left wing, iv, 355

Sakíla, mountain, 169, iv, 342; viii, 41

dragon of, 154, iv, 342 *seq.* referred to, iv, 343, 351,

358

stronghold of, taken by Rûmans, viii, 47

Sakláb (Slavonia), ii, 360; iii, 152, 164, 177, 185, 204,

218, 221 *seq.*, 235, 238,

243, 255; vi, 179; vii,

112, 115, 364; viii, 379

Salm, eldest son of Farídún, 140, 141, i, 42, 90, 91, 183 *seq.*,

335, 342, 344, 362; ii,

19, 237, 318; iii, 37, 115,

iv, 66, 69, 269, 272; v,

205, 261, 284; vi, 353;

vii, 101; viii, 266, 270,

300, 376 *note*, 378, 381

racial significance of, i, 54 etymology of, Firdausi's, i,

174

naming of, i, 187

horoscope of, i, 188

receives Rûm and the West, i, 189

envies Íraj, i, 190

plots with Túr, i, 190

Túr and, demand the abdication of Íraj, i, 191

Íraj visits, i, 198

Íraj not welcomed by, i, 198 *seq.*

slay Íraj, i, 201

send Íraj's head to Farídún, i, 202

hear of Minúchihr, i, 208

send an embassy to Farídún, i, 208

receive Farídún's reply, i, 213 *seq.*

prepare for war, i, 215

worsted by Minúchihr, i, 220

plan night-surprise, i, 220 worsted, i, 221

- Salm, hears of Túr's defeat and death, i, 223  
 retreats on the castle of the Aláns, i, 223  
 prevented by Minúchihr, i, 223  
 flees from Minúchihr, i, 227  
 slain by Minúchihr, i, 228  
 troops of, ask quarter of Minúchihr, i, 228  
 head of, sent to Farídún, i, 229  
 Scimitar of, iv, 335 *seq.*
- Salt, Rustam's caravan of, i, 330 *seq.*  
 desert, i, 3  
 fish, legend of the, vi, 76 *seq.*
- Sám, son of Narímán, Iránian hero, father of Zál and grandfather of Rustam, 141, 142, i, 42, 207, 212, 231, 235, 238 *seq.*, 337, 344, 375; ii, 4, 16, 17, 33, 34, 49, 125, 126, 137, 140, 173, 182, 183; iii, 35, 121, 202, 215, 260, 279, 283; iv, 222, 251, 290, 301, 319; v, 14, 15, 58, 62, 63, 196, 198 *seq.*, 242, 262 *seq.*, 266, 267, 274, 285, 286, 289, 290; vii, 74; viii, 223  
 pronunciation of, i, 95 *note*  
 etymology of, i, 171 *seq.*  
 Minúchihr confided to, by Farídún, i, 231  
 mace of, i, 235, 290, 297, 328 given by Zál to Rustam, i, 378  
 speech of, to Minúchihr, i, 238  
 casts away his son Zál at birth, i, 241  
 hears rumours of Zál, i, 243  
 dreams of, concerning Zál, i, 243, 244  
 consults the archmages and bidden to seek his son, i, 243  
 finds his son on Mount Alburz, i, 244 *seq.*
- Sám, son of, restored to him by the Símurgh, i, 247  
 returns home with Zál, i, 248  
 congratulated by Minúchihr, i, 248  
 goes with Zál to court, i, 249  
 tells of his quest to Minúchihr, i, 250  
 Minúchihr's gifts to, i, 251  
 public rejoicings at his home-coming, i, 252  
 goes to the wars and leaves Zál to rule in Zábulistán, i, 253  
 Mihráb tributary to, i, 256  
 Zál writes to, about Rúdába, i, 275  
 receives Zál's letter, i, 277  
 consults the astrologers, i, 278  
 Rustam's birth foretold to, i, 278  
 replies to Zál's letter, i, 279  
 returns from the war, i, 280  
 summoned to court, i, 289  
 welcomed by Minúchihr, i, 289  
 tells of his campaign, i, 290  
 slays Karkwí, i, 291  
 bidden to destroy Mihráb and all his belongings, i, 292  
 welcomes and promises to help Zál, i, 293  
 writes to Minúchihr and pleads past services, i, 295  
 tells of the slaying of the dragon of the Kashaf, i, 296  
 "One blow," i, 297, 299  
 receives Sindukht in audience, i, 302  
 invited by Sindukht to visit Kábul, i, 305  
 dismisses Sindukht with gifts, i, 305  
 hears of Zál's success with Minúchihr and informs Mihráb, i, 314  
 goes with Zál to Kábul, i, 317

Sám, sees Rúdába and felicitates Zál, i, 318  
 returns to Sístán, i, 319  
 entertains Míhráb and Sín-dukht, i, 319  
 leaves Zál the regent of Sístán and goes on a campaign, i, 319  
 hears of the birth of Rustam, i, 323  
 writes to congratulate Zál, i, 323  
 comes to see Rustam, i, 324  
 bids Zál and Rustam farewell, i, 327  
 hears of Rustam's success at Mount Sipand and writes to Zál, i, 334  
 Naudar's appeal to, i, 339  
 goes to court, i, 340  
 met and offered the crown by the Íránian chiefs, i, 340  
 refuses the crown, i, 340  
 reconciles the chiefs and Naudar, i, 341  
 counsels Naudar, i, 341  
 rewarded by Naudar, i, 341  
 departs, i, 341  
 death of, referred to, i, 345, 346, 349  
 obsequies of, 358  
 mace of, given by Zál to Rustam, i, 378  
 exploits of, recounted by Rustam, v, 202  
 Sám, Íránian warrior, *temp.*  
 Yazdagird son of Shápúr, vi, 395  
 Sába Keresáspa Narimanau, Íránian hero, i, 171 *seq.*  
 Samangán, city south-east of Balkh (?), 144 ii, 121 *seq.*, 130  
 king of, 144, ii, 118, 140, 184  
 entertains Rustam, ii, 122  
 father of Zhanda Razm, ii, 150  
 Sámánid, Sámánids, i, 14, 20, 21, 67; vii, 5, 383  
 end of dynasty of, i, 21

Samarkand (Sogdiana, Sughd), city and district in Turkistán, ii, 241; vii, 167, 358, 359; viii, 377; ix, 96, 115  
 early seat of Aryan civilization (?), i, 7  
 settlement of the Huns at, i, 19  
 Sambáz, Íránian chief, speech of, viii, 242  
 Samírán, king, vi, 405 and *note*  
 Samkurán, Íránian hero, iv, 149  
 Sandar, Sandarús, the Arar tree, vi, 19  
 Sandal, Sandalí, city in Hind, vii, 395, 396, 401 *seq.*  
 king of, entertained by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 140 *seq.*  
 Sanja, a div, ii, 39, 40, 44, 55; iv, 296; v, 204  
 Sanscrit, vii, 382  
 Sapad, mountain. See Spentó-dáta.  
 Sapandámad. See Sipandámad.  
 Sapínúd, daughter of Shangul, vi, 3; vii, 144  
 married to Bahrám Gúr, vii, 128  
 finds out who her husband is, vii, 131  
 plans Bahrám Gúr's flight from Hind, vii, 132  
 reproached by Shangul, vii, 135  
 converted to Zoroastrianism, vii, 139  
 visited by Shangul, vii, 142  
 Sapor I (Shápúr son of Ardashír *q.v.*), Sásánian king, vi, 294, 321  
 Sapor II (Shápúr son of Urmuzd *q.v.*), Sásánian king, i, 374; v, 13; vi, 294, 321; viii, 41  
 Sapor III (Shápúr son of Shápúr *q.v.*), vi, 365  
 Sarakhs, city in Khurásán, between Nishápúr and Marv, ii, 108

- Saraparda, i, 84  
*Sarcostemma viminalis*. See Homa.  
 Sargon I. of Agani, v, 293  
   foundling legend of, v, 393  
 Sarf, city in Mázandarán, i, 230, 289, 366; v, 174; vii, 237; viii, 168, 341, 355, 392; ix, 86  
   Iránian captives imprisoned at, i, 363  
   released, i, 367  
 Sar-i-pul-i-Zohab, vii, 187  
 Sarkab, Rúman general, viii, 281, 292  
 Sarkash (Sergius), minstrel, 174, viii, 193, 398 *seq.* 406  
   Story of, 174, viii, 396  
   disgrace of, viii, 399  
 Sarkhán. See Súfarai.  
 Sarúch, desert in Kirmán, ii, 226 vii, 362  
 Sarúg, Jacob of, Syriac poet. See Jacob.  
 Sarv, king of Yaman, 140, i, 211, 286; v, 260; vi, 73  
   daughters of, asked in marriage by Farídún for his sons, i, 178  
   consults his chiefs, i, 179  
   agrees, conditionally, to Farídún's request, i, 181  
   attempts to outwit Farídún's sons, i, 183 *seq.*  
   gives his daughters in marriage to Farídún's sons, i, 185  
 Sarv=Azád Sarv, *q.v.*  
 Sásán, eponym of Sásanian dynasty, viii, 219, 220, 330, 341  
 Sásán, son of Bahman, ii 3; v, 290  
   disinherited and flees from court, v, 291  
   account of, v, 291  
 Sásán, name of Dará's son and several of his descendants, ii 3; vi, 200, 211, 224, 255; ix, 105 and *note*  
 Sásán, descendants of, help Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 224  
   House of, vi, 251, 270 and *note*  
   lineage of, ix, 56, 105 and *note*  
 Sásán, father of Ardshír Pápakán, 160, vi, 3, 193, 198, 200, 201, 240  
   legend of, vi, 211 *seq.*  
   marries daughter of Pápak, vi, 213  
 Sásanian, Sásanians, i, 11, 374; iii, 9; v, 13, 281; vi, 81, 209, 225, 253, 257; vii, 85, 185, 212, 237; viii, 65, 72, 73, 214, 262, 330, 413  
   *note*; ix, 4, 5, 46, 47, 50, 54, 65, 72, 73, 76, 77, 83, 105  
   dynasty, i, 49, 374; ii, 10; v, 10, 282; vi, 249 *seq.*, 253, 257, 321; vii, 1 *seq.*, 381; viii, 73; ix, 4  
   Tabarí on the rise of the, vi, 198  
   characterised, vi, 249  
   Zoroastrianism under, vi, 251  
   Mas'údí on Church and State under, vi, 251  
   duration of, vi, 257  
   empire, i, 11; vi, 193, 327; viii, 193  
   conquered by the Arabs, ix, 65 *seq.*  
   genealogical table of, vi, 3, 253  
   Tabarí's history of, vi, 14  
   *note*  
   fictitious genealogies of, v, 290; vi, 199, 211, 256  
   view of Sikandar, vi, 15, 224 and *note*, 240 and *note*  
   rivalry with Arsacids, viii, 73  
   usage, viii, 190  
   architecture, viii, 193  
   race viii, 285, 386, *note*  
 Satire, Firdausi's, on Sultán Mahmúd, i, 40 *seq.*

- Satrapy, satrapies, Núshírwán's  
four ix, 69
- Saturn, planet, i, 72, 100, 161,  
204, 245, 295, 311; ii,  
183, 208, 215, 247, 263,  
310, 319, 394, 407; iii,  
32, 110, 178, 232, 237, 254,  
268, 318; iv, 31, 214;  
v, 68, 89, 136, 154, 159,  
220, 233; vi, 97, 115, 176,  
281, 318, 385; vii, 92,  
151, 252, 267, 346, 418;  
viii, 24, 66, 321, 392, 395;  
ix, 73  
sphere of, ix, 92
- Sav (the Sôvbar of the Pahlavi  
texts, now Chashmah-i-  
Sabz), a lake among the  
hills in the neighbourhood  
of Tús and Mashad, 163,  
vi, 373, 392  
legend of, vi, 372, 391 *seq.*
- Savalán, mountain in Ázarbáiján  
v, 14
- Sáwa, Túránian hero, 149, iii, 224  
slain by Rustam, iii, 224
- Sáwa, Íránian hero, v, 154  
left in charge of the Brazen  
Hold by Asfandiyár, i,  
154
- Sáwa, ruler of the Turks, 170;  
viii, 74, 94 *seq.*, 100 *seq.*,  
107, 108, 110 *seq.*, 123, 129,  
132, 133, 135, 137, 139,  
164, 169, 174, 216, 219,  
222, 224, 240  
=Chao-wou, viii, 72  
attacks Hurmuzd, viii, 92  
letter of, to Hurmuzd, viii,  
93  
prophecy about, viii, 98  
Hurmuzd sends Kharrád,  
son of Barzán, to, viii, 110  
hears of Bahrám Chúbína's  
army and blames Kharrád  
viii, 110  
offers of, to Bahrám Chúbína,  
viii, 113 *seq.*, 117 *seq.*  
employs sorcery against the  
Íránians, viii, 123  
defeated and slain, viii, 126
- Sáwa, head of, set on lance, viii,  
130  
wealth of, sent to Hurmuzd,  
viii, 133
- Sawurg, Indian king, 159, vi, 64,  
118
- Sayce, Professor, on the Ama-  
zons, vi, 71
- Scandinavians, vi, 73  
found the Russian empire,  
vi, 19
- Scimitar of Salm, iv, 335 *seq.*
- Scotland, vi, 79  
vitrified forts in, vi, 79
- Scribe, scribes, office of, highly  
esteemed, i, 27 and *note*;  
vii, 311; viii, 50  
put to death by Hur-  
muzd, viii; 71, 81 *seq.*
- Scriptures, Zoroastrian. *See*  
Zandavasta.
- Scylla, Nisus and, story of, vi,  
323 *note*
- Scythia, iv, 316
- Scythians (Sacaë), their relations  
with the Íránians, i, 17  
wars of, with Darius Hys-  
tapsis, v, 11
- Seasons, confusion of the, ix, 77  
*note*
- Sects, Muhammadan, i, 99  
parable of, i, 107
- Seleucia (Bih Ardshír *q.v.*), city  
on the right bank of the  
Tigris, opposite to Ctesi-  
phon (Taisafún), ii, 80;  
vi, 254, 291 *note*, 322; viii,  
189, 194, 196
- Semiramis, legendary queen of  
Assyria, historically Sam-  
muramat, wife (?) of  
Samsi Adad king of Assy-  
ria (B.C. 824-804), ii, 10;  
vi, 66, 405 *note*  
legend of, v, 292, 293  
Humái and, v, 292, 293
- Semites, the, i, 9  
relations of, with the Írán-  
ians, i, 9 *seq.*, ix, 65
- Seneca the younger, Nero's tutor  
(B.C. 3—A.D. 65), vii, 279

- Seoses (Súfarai ?), Persian commander-in-chief, *temp.*  
Kubád, vii, 187
- Sergiopolis, viii, 188
- Sergius, Saint and Martyr, viii, 188  
patron saint of Khusráu Parwíz, viii, 188, 195  
Roman leader in Tabarí, viii, 188
- Sergius (Sarkash), minstrel, viii, 193
- Serpent, serpents, on Zakhák's shoulders, i, 139  
worship and human sacrifice, i, 143
- Seven, favourite number in Persian story, vii, 186, 280,  
Banquets of Núshírwán. *See* Banquet.
- Climes. *See* Climes.
- Courses (Haft Khwán) of Rustam. *See* Rustam.
- Planets. *See* Planet.
- Persian nobles, legend of the vi, 207  
transferred to Ardshír Pápákán (?), vi, 207
- Stages (Haft Khwán) of Asfandiyár. *See* Asfandiyár.
- Warriors, Night of the, 143, ii, 25, 82, 107 *seq.*
- Counts, jewel, viii, 392
- and forty Sháhs, viii, 395  
*and note*
- Severus, Roman Emperor (A.D. 146-211), vi, 322  
Hatra besieged by, vi, 322
- Shabáhang, Farhád's steed, iii, 313; iv, 8
- Bízhan's steed, iv, 47
- Shabdíz, Bahrá'm Gúr's steed, vii, 37, 80
- Gív's steed, iii, 257
- Luhrásp's steed, iv, 323  
taken by Gushtásp, iv, 323
- Míhráb's steed, i, 326
- Khusráu Parwíz' steed, viii, 407; ix, 30
- Shabrang, Bahrá'm Gúr's steed, vii, 37, 80
- Bízhan's steed, iii, 296, 302, 313; iv, 8, 39, 50, 119, 124
- Shádán son of Barzín, one of Firdausi's authorities, i, 67, 69; vii, 382, 423
- Shadklád, son of 'Ad, legend of, i, 100
- Sháddward, treasure, viii, 406 and *note*
- Shaghád, son of Zál, 157, v, 261  
Story of Rustam and, 157, v, 260 *seq.*  
provenance of, v, 260  
birth of, v, 263  
astrologers' evil prognostic of, v, 264  
sent to be brought up at Kábúl, v, 264  
marries the daughter of the king of Kábúl, v, 264  
king of Kábúl and, plot against Rustam, v, 265 *seq.*  
pretended quarrel of, with the king of Kábúl, v, 266  
goes to Zábúl, v, 267  
cause of, taken up by Rustam, v, 267  
persuades Rustam to go with Zawára and a small escort to Kábúl, v, 268  
warns the king of Kábúl of Rustam's coming, v, 269  
glories over Rustam, v, 271  
outwitted and slain by Rustam, v, 272  
corpse of, burnt, v, 277
- Sháh, accession of, ceremony at, vi, 409
- Sháhá, city in Hámávarán, ii, 89
- Sháhábád, the modern name for the ruins of Gund-i-Shápúr in Khúzistán, vi, 295
- Shahd, river, ii, 108; iii, 11, 116, 118, 123, 152, 173, 230, 241; vi, 391, 392
- Shahd, mountain, iii, 237



- Sháhnáma (Bastán-náma, Khudai-náma), 139, i, 66; ix, 4 *seq.*, 43, 50, 61, 70  
 subject-matter of, how preserved, i, 56  
 origin of, i, 65 *seq.*  
 put into writing, i, 66  
 Prose, compilers of, referred to, viii, 71, 73  
 probably compiled by Magi, i, 69  
 referred to, by Firdausí, i, 108, 109; iv, 141 *seq.*; vi, 196  
 more than one, i, 29, 66, 67, 69  
 Dakíki and. *See* Dakíhi.
- Sháhnáma, Firdausí's, 139, 176, 3, 23 *seq.*; iii, 7, 9, 11, 14, 271, 286; iv, 7, 8, 136 *seq.*, 316, v.9. *seq.*, 19, 20, 22 *seq.*, 27 *seq.*, 293, 294; vi, 3 and *note*, 30, 31, 66 *seq.*, 72, 79, 82 *seq.*, 194 *seq.*, 205 *seq.*, 249 *seq.*, 253, 256, 270 *note*, 294, 301, 307, 310, 325, 326; vii, 5, 156, 184, 185, 215, 217, 317, 381; viii, 3, 41, 42, 71, 72, 74 *seq.*, 187 *seq.*, 191, 192  
 scene of, i, 3  
 theme of, i, 8, 47  
 Baisinghar Khán's edition of, i, 23  
 completion of, Firdausí on, 176; ix, 121  
 date of completion of, i, 24; ix, 122  
 length, metre, and language of, i, 47; iv, 8; ix, 122  
 anomalies of, i, 48  
   explained, i, 48  
 divisions and chief characters of, i, 49  
 machinery of, i, 51  
 leading motives of, i, 53  
 cosmogony of, i, 71; iv, 136  
 imagery of, i, 72  
 editions of, i, 76  
 translations of, i, 77, 87
- Sháhnáma, principles of the present translation of, i, 77 *seq.*  
 certain terms used in, explained, i, 80 *seq.*  
 Firdausí on the compilation of, i, 108  
 historic element in mythical period of, iii, 8 *seq.*  
 Greek subject-matter in, vi, 11  
 derivation of *Sikandar* given in, vi, 19  
 historic period of, i, 49; vi, 29  
 Írán and, analogy between, vi, 193  
 portion of, corresponding to *Kárnámak*, vi, 196  
*Kárnámak* and, compared, vi, 200 *seq.*, 255 *seq.*  
 Wisdom-literature in, vii, 278 *seq.*
- Sháhnáma, of Abú- 'Alí Muhammad, i, 69
- Shahra, chief, 165, vii, 92  
 made king of *Túrán* by Bahráma Gúr, vii, 92
- Shahrám-Pírúz. *See* Bádán Pírúz.
- Shahrán, ix, 102  
 pleads with Máhwí for Yazdagird, ix, 102
- Shahrán Guráz, Íránian warrior, speech of, viii, 239
- Shahránguráz (Hurmuzd Shahránguráz, Guráz *q.v.*), 175; ix, 50  
 heads conspiracy against Guráz; ix, 54
- Shahr-Bánú-Iram, sister of Gív and wife of Rustam, ii, 4, 384
- Shahrbaráz (Guráz *q.v.*), Íránian general, viii, 194; ix, 43, 50  
 revolt of, viii, 195  
 sons of, viii, 196  
 rebellion of, ix, 43, 44  
 alliance of, with Heraclius, ix, 44
- Shahr-Barz. *See* Shahrbaráz.

- Shahrgír, warrior in Sikandar's host, vi, 125, 126  
 takes Kaidáta's son and daughter-in-law prisoners, vi, 125
- Shahrgír, captain of the host to Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 241  
 Ardshír's instructions to, vi, 241  
 goes to Ardshír's help, vi, 244 and *note*
- Shahrguráz (Shahubaráz *q.v.*), ix, 50
- Shahrináz, sister of Jamshíd, wife of Zahhák and Farídún, and mother of Salm and Túr, i, 90, 142, 164 *seq.*, 177  
 married to Zahhák, i, 146  
 sons of, by Farídún, i, 177
- Shahrír, Shahrívar, ameshas-penta, i, 88; iii, 286, 328  
 month and day, i, 88; v, 310; vii, 76
- Shahrwaráz (Shahrbaráz *q.v.*), ix, 50
- Shahrwí, archimage, vi, 329  
 minister during Shápúr son of Urmuzd's minority, vi, 329
- Shahryár, son of Shúin and Khusrau Parwiz, ix, 39  
 father of Yazdagird, ix, 64
- Sháhwi, eldest son of Haftwád, vi, 237  
 referred to, vi, 206  
 helps his father against Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 236  
 executed, vi, 245
- Sháhwi (=Máhwí?), one of Firdausi's authorities, vii, 382, 394
- Shakespeare, quoted, iii, 286; v, 156 *note*; vii, 383; viii, 187
- Shakn, region, iii, 152, 177, 185, 192, 204, 222, 223, 228, 237
- Shám (Syria), ii, 80, 84; vi, 357; viii, 170
- Shám, king of, taken prisoner by Rustam, ii, 97
- Shamásás, Túránian hero, 142; i, 346; ii, 12, 18  
 Khazarwán and, invade Kábulistán, i, 345, 358  
 parleyed with by Mihráb to gain time, i, 358  
 flees from Zál, i, 361  
 met and defeated by Káran, i, 361
- Shambalíd, daughter of Barzín, vii, 53  
 married to Bahrám Gúr, vii, 53
- Shamírán, Túránian hero, iii, 185  
 comes to aid Pírán, iii, 152
- Shamírán, stronghold north of Harát (?), ix, 91, 94
- Shammákh, king of Súr, iv, 57, 146
- Shammás, legendary founder of Fire-worship, vi, 339 *note*
- Shammás, Núshzád's general, vii, 219, 272
- Shamtá, viii, 195, 196
- Shangul, king of Hind, *temp.*  
 Kai Khusrau, 149, iii, 161, 172, 185, 198, 205, 210, 217, 251  
 comes to aid Pírán, iii, 152  
 volunteers to fight Rustam, iii, 209, 216  
 challenges Rustam, iii, 221  
 worsted, iii, 221  
*temp.* Bahrám Gúr, 165, vi, 325; vii, 109 *seq.*  
 border-raids of, vii, 110  
 gives audience to the Iránian envoy (Bahrám Gúr), vii, 112  
 state of, described, vii, 112  
 brother of, vii, 113  
 vaunts his own greatness, vii, 114  
 wife of, the daughter of the Faghfúr, vii, 115  
 son of, vii, 115  
 entertains Bahrám Gúr, vii, 116

Shangul, Bahrám Gúr wrestles before, vii, 117  
 plays at polo, vii, 118  
 Bahrám Gúr displays his marksmanship before, vii, 118  
 tries to find out who the Persian envoy (Bahrám Gúr) is, vii, 118 *seq.*  
 takes counsel with his sages, vii, 126  
 offers a daughter and great advancement to Bahrám Gúr, vii, 127  
 marries Sapínúd to Bahrám Gúr, vii, 128 *seq.*  
 goes to a festival, vii, 134  
 hears of Bahrám Gúr's flight vii, 135  
 reproaches Sapínúd, vii, 135  
 makes a league with Bahrám Gúr, 137  
 bids farewell to Sapínúd, vii, 137  
 makes a new treaty with Bahrám Gúr, vii, 140  
 entertained with seven other kings by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 140 *seq.*  
 visits his daughter Sapínúd, vii, 142  
 farewells Sapínúd, vii, 143  
 makes Bahrám Gúr his heir, vii, 143  
 Bahrám Gúr's parting gifts to, vii, 144  
 sends Gipsies to Írán, vii, 149  
 Shapigán, treasury of, i, 61, 62  
 Shápúr, Pishdádian hero, i, 210, 211, 215  
   slain, i, 352  
 Shápúr, Kaiánian hero,<sup>1</sup> ii, 271, 338, 340; iii, 19, 289, 322, 331; iv, 292  
   hails Gushtásp as Sháh, iv, 362  
 Shápúr, Ashkánian (Parthian) king, vi, 197, 210

Shápúr, son of Pápak, vi, 199  
 Shápúr, son of Ardshír Pápakán, Sháh (Sapor I), 161, i, 42; vi, 3, 256, 303, 307, 313, 315, 321 *seq.*, viii, 265  
   compilation of Zandavasta under, i, 62, 63  
   stories of, in Kárnámak, vi, 196, 255  
   Tabarí, vi, 255, 257  
   crowned in his father's lifetime, vi, 257  
   secret birth of, vi, 261  
   origin of name, vi, 262 *note*  
   recognised and acknowledged by Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 264  
   discovers the daughter of Míhrak, vi, 268 *seq.*  
   summoned and counselled by Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 286 *seq.*  
   confused with Shápúr son of Urmuzd, vi, 294, 321, 324, 327  
   Reign of, 161, vi, 294 *seq.*  
   Note on, vi, 294  
   historical inaccuracies of, vi, 294  
   wars of, with Rome, vi, 294, 297  
   Odenathus and, vi, 294  
   defeats the Rómans, vi, 297  
   receives tribute from Cæsar, vi, 298  
   builds cities, vi, 298  
   bids Bazánúsh build a bridge at Shúshtar, vi, 298  
   summons and counsels Urmuzd, vi, 299  
 Shápúr, son of Urmuzd, Sháh (Sapor II), 162, 163, i, 374; v, 16 *note*; vi, 3, 294, 295, 307, 371, 373, 405 (?); vii, 359; viii, 41  
   provides for uniformity of Zoroastrian doctrine, i, 62

<sup>1</sup> May be identical with the above in legend.

Shápúr, son of Urmuzd, Zoroastrian canon closed under, i, 63  
 referred to, vi, 318  
 Reign of, 162, vi, 321 *seq.*  
 Note on, vi, 321 *seq.*  
 bridge of, at Taisafún, vi, 321, 329  
 residences of, vi, 321, 330  
 confused with Shápúr, son of Ardshír, vi, 294, 321, 324, 327  
 triumphant treaty of, with the Rúmans, vi, 326, 355  
 cities of, vi, 327, 357  
 birth of, vi, 328  
 crowned as an infant, vi, 328  
 education of, vi, 329  
 Málíka offers to betray her father's hold to, vi, 331  
 opens the gate to, vi, 333  
 sends Málíka to his camp, vi, 333  
 treatment of Arab captives by, vi, 323, 334  
 receives the title of Zú'l Aktáf *q.v.*, vi, 335  
 returns to Párs and receives tribute, vi, 335  
 consults the astrologers, vi, 335  
 visits Cæsar in disguise, vi, 336  
 entertained by Cæsar, vi, 337  
 denounced by a Persian resident at Cæsar's court, vi, 337  
 arrested, vi, 337  
 sewed up in an ass's skin and imprisoned, vi, 338  
 pitied by an Iránian slave-girl, vi, 339  
 freed from ass's skin by slave-girl, vi, 340  
 entertained by a gardener, vi, 341 *seq.*  
 sends the gardener to the high priest, vi, 344  
 described by the gardener, vi, 344

Shápúr, praises the slave-girl, vi, 346  
 prepares to attack Cæsar, vi, 346  
 sends spies to Taisafún, vi, 346  
 sends tidings of his victory over Cæsar to the provinces, vi, 348  
 treatment of Cæsar by, vi, 349  
 invades Rúm, vi, 350  
 defeats Yánuš, vi, 352  
 bids Bazánúsh come to him, vi, 354  
 dictates terms of peace, vi, 355  
 returns to Istakhr, vi, 356  
 takes Nasíbín, vi, 356  
 names and honours the slave-girl, vi, 356  
 rewards the gardener, vi, 357  
 keeps Cæsar captive, vi, 357  
 sends Cæsar's corpse to Rúm, vi, 357  
 arranges a disputation between Mání and the high priest, vi, 358  
 Mání executed by, vi, 359  
 arranges for the succession with his brother Ardshír, vi, 360 *seq.*  
 dies, vi, 362  
 Shápúr, son of Shápúr, Sháh (Sapor III), 163, vi, 3, 251, 360, 371; vii, 171, 186  
 Ardshír, son of Urmuzd, resigns the throne to, vi, 364  
 Reign of, 163, vi, 365 *seq.*  
 Note on, vi, 365  
 death of, vi, 366  
 Tabari on, vi, 365  
 Shápúr, son of Yazdagird, king of Armenia, vi, 373  
 Shápúr of Rai, Kubád's commander-in-chief, vii, 184, 185; viii, 72  
 summoned to overthrow Súfarai, vii, 191

- Shápúr of Rai, conference of, with Kubád, vii, 192  
 goes to Shíráz and arrests Súfarai, vii, 193  
 conveys Súfarai to Sháh Kubád, vii, 194
- Shápúr, Iránian noble, *temp.* Núshírwán, vii, 304, 333
- Shápúr, Iránian warrior, 172, viii, 202, 225, 257, 259, 269, 293, 296  
 deceived by Cæsar's talisman, viii, 273  
 praised by Cæsar, viii, 279  
 Bahráw Chúbína writes to, viii, 285  
 receives Istakhr and Dáráb-gird, viii, 313
- Shápúr, father of Píruíz, ix, 80
- Shápúr Gird (Gund-i-Shápúr *q.v.*) city, vi, 295, 298
- Shatt-al-Arab, the combined streams of the Tigris and Euphrates, ix, 67
- Sháwarán, Iránian hero, 151, ii, 73, 90, 111, 228, 249, 250, 255, 271, 318; iii, 20, 34, 43, 45, 48, 67, 115, 334, iv, 97, 105, 147, 275
- Shawwál, the tenth Muhammadan month, vi, 208
- Sheep's heads, Bahráw Chúbína and the, viii, 74, 107  
 omen of, reported to Hurmuzd, viii, 108
- Shem, patriarch, vi, 65
- Shepherds, Kai Khusrau brought up by, ii, 328 *seq.*
- Sher-kappí, viii, 322 *note*
- Shíbán, vi, 397
- Shída (Pashang), son of Afrásiyáb, 152, i, 92; iii, 262, 350; iv, 10 *seq.*, 15, 135, 156, 158 *seq.*, 206, 222, 287, 290  
 consulted by his father, iii, 250 *seq.*  
 goes on embassy to Púlád-wand, iii, 255
- Shída, refuses to interfere in the fight between Rustam and Púlád-wand, iii, 363  
 sent by Afrásiyáb to Khárazm, iv, 11  
 defeated by Ashkash, iv, 60, 72  
 commands the left wing, iv, 155  
 surname of, meaning of, iv, 155 *note*  
 urges Afrásiyáb to attack Kai Khusrau, iv, 159  
 Afrásiyáb's reply to, iv, 160  
 wishes to meet Kai Khusrau in single combat, iv, 161  
 goes on an embassy to Kai Khusrau, iv, 161  
 skirmish of, with Iránian outposts, iv, 164  
 welcomed by Káran, iv, 165  
 mail and steed of, iv, 168  
 receives Kai Khusrau's reply, iv, 170  
 returns to Afrásiyáb, iv, 170  
 goes to fight Kai Khusrau, iv, 171  
 parley of, with Kai Khusrau, iv, 172  
 challenges Kai Khusrau to a wrestling-bout, iv, 173  
 urged by his interpreter to flee from Kai Khusrau, iv, 174  
 refuses, iv, 174  
 wrestles and is overthrown, iv, 175  
 Kai Khusrau instructs Ruhám to bury, iv, 176
- Shídásp, minister to Tahmúras, i, 127
- Shídásp, son of Gushtásp, 155, ii, 3; v, 26, 58  
 death of, foretold by Jámásp, v, 50  
 given command of one wing, v, 55  
 slain, v, 58

- Shídúsh, Íránian hero, i, 211 ; ii, 58, 85, 158, 340 ; iii, 33, 45, 48, 127, 129, 130, 139, 141, 157, 248, 253 ; iv, 13, 15, 25, 191  
 with Káran and Kishwád, pursues Kurákhán, i, 354  
 put in command of the rear, iv, 92  
 Kai Khusrau remonstrated with by, and other nobles, for refusing audience, iv, 275  
 Shí'ite, Shí'ites, Muhammadan sect, i, 13  
 origin of, i, 13  
 Firdausí a, i, 24  
 Shikbán, Íránian warrior, vi, 395  
 Shiknán, place, vii, 359  
 Shingán, region, iii, 228, 238 ; iv, 65  
 Shíráz, city in Párs (Farsistán), 166, i, 236 ; vi, 198 *note*, 210 ; vii, 6, 173, 190, 193, 194  
 Shírín, wife of Khusrau Parwíz, 174, 175, viii, 187, 194, 363, 383, 407 ; ix, 28, 36  
 enmity of, to Shírwí, viii, 189, 191, 193  
 account of, viii, 192  
 Khusrau and, Persian poem, viii, 192  
 meaning of, viii, 193  
 Maryam murdered by, viii, 193, 389  
 a Christian, viii, 195  
 warns Khusrau Parwíz against Gurdyá, viii, 364  
 Khusrau Parwíz and, ix, 7  
 Story of, 174, viii, 382  
 married to, viii, 386  
 gilded chamber given to, viii, 389  
 hears Kubád proclaimed Sháh, viii, 416  
 informs Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 416  
 has charge of Shírwí's horoscope, ix, 16  
 Shírín, has charge of Rája's letter ix, 17  
 companions Khusrau Parwíz in prison, ix, 29  
 reproached and summoned by Shírwí, ix, 36  
 makes her Will, ix, 36  
 goes to Court, ix, 37  
 justifies herself, ix, 38, 40  
 exonerated, ix, 38, 41  
 sons of, ix, 39  
 unveils to the Court, ix, 39  
 Shírwí enamoured of, ix, 39  
 makes request of Shírwí, ix, 40, 41  
 goes home, ix, 40  
 distributes her wealth, ix, 40  
 frees her slaves, ix, 41  
 poisons herself, ix, 42  
 Shírkhán (Shírván, district and town west of the Caspian between the Kur river and Darband ?), i, 169  
 Shírkhún, a Zabulí, v, 184  
 guides Bahman to Rustam, v, 184  
 Shíru, son of Gushtásp, 155, v, 26  
 slain, v, 57  
 Shíruya, son of Bízhan, iv, 360  
 goes with Zarír to Rúm, iv, 360  
 Shírwán (Shírván ?) iii 216.  
*See* Shírkhán.  
 Shírwí, Íránian hero, i, 207, 215  
 helps to take the Castle of the Alans, i, 223 *seq.*  
 conveys the spoil to Farídún, i, 230, 232  
 Shírwí, Núshírwán's commander-in-chief, vii, 251  
 appointed to receive the Ruman tribute, vii, 262  
 Shírwí (Kubád *q.v.*), Sháh, 174, 175, viii, 188, 190, 371 *seq.* ; ix, 7, 8, 11, 27, 28, 31 *seq.* ; 36, 45, 47, 64  
 Shírín's enmity to, viii, 189, 191, 193  
 internment of, viii, 194, 196, 391  
 released, viii, 196, 415

- Shírwí (Kubád), secret and public names of, viii, 372, 416  
 astrologers consulted at birth of, viii, 372  
 ill-omened horoscope of, viii, 372; ix, 16  
 referred to, viii, 373, 390  
 kept by Shírin, ix, 16  
 Khusrau Parwíz gives Caesar's gifts to, viii, 381  
 boorishness of, viii, 390  
 Khusrau Parwíz' displeasure with, viii, 390  
 sends to take Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 419  
 Reign of, 175, ix, 3  
 Note on, ix, 3  
 Length of, ix, 42  
 treatment of Khusrau Parwíz by, ix, 7  
 writes to Heraclius, ix, 7  
 Ashtád and Kharrád report their interview with Khusrau Parwíz to, ix, 27  
 reproaches and summons Shírin, ix, 36, 37  
 falls in love with Shírin, ix, 39  
 grants Shírin's requests, ix, 40, 42  
 poisoned, ix, 42  
 son of, ix, 42  
 Shírzád, herald in Núshírwán's host, vii, 252  
 Shírzil, Iránian warrior, viii, 296  
 Shíz (Takht-i-Sulaimán), seat of the Magi in Ázarbáiján, i, 60; viii, 190  
 Fire-temple at, vii, 5  
 Khátún sent to, vii, 5  
 Shoemaker, Bahram Gúr and the, 164, vii, 24  
 Núshírwán and the, 169, vii, 218, 260  
 offer of, to advance money to Núshírwán, viii, 48  
 rejected, viii, 50, 71  
 Shu'ba Mughíra, companion of the Prophet, ix, 69, 83  
 embassy of, ix, 69, 82  
 Shu'fb, Arab chief, 158, vi, 21  
 attacks Dáráb, vi, 21  
 defeated and slain, vi, 22  
 Shúlak, Gushtásp's steed (Dakfkf), v, 73  
 Asfandiyár's steed (Fir-dausi), v, 126  
 Shúráb (Sura), city on the Euphrates, east of Antioch, vii, 217  
 place of Gushtásp's exile, vii, 254  
 taken by Núshírwán, vii, 217, 254  
 Shúrsán, vi, 379  
 Shús (Sús, Susa), city on the Karkhah river north west of Shúshtar in Khúzistán, vi, 327  
 Shúshtar, Shústár, city on the Dujayl (Kárún) river in Khúzistán, vi, 199, 295  
 and *note*, 299; viii, 381  
 dam and bridge at, vi, 298, 326  
 Sicily, vi, 30  
 Alexander the Great's legendary visit to, vi, 30  
 Siege-operations, iii, 246; iv, 208  
*seq.*; vii, 254, 257  
 Signs, the Twelve (Zodiac), vii, 408  
 Sigz, man of (Rustam), ii, 100  
 and *note*; iii, 183, 209, 218, 221  
 Sigzian, a native of Sigz, v, 226  
 and *note* 228  
 = Rustam, iii, 209, 225, 227; v, 241  
 = Zawára, v, 226, 228  
 = Farámarz, v, 228  
 Sikandar (Iskandar, Alexander the Great, *q.v.*), Sháh, 158-160, i, 42, 49; ii, 3, 8 *seq.*; v, 30; vi, 11, 13, 16, 18, 29, 30, 33, 193, 210, 240  
 and *note*, 325, 353; viii, 52, 214, 217, 242, 262, 381, 387, 392; ix, 26  
 paternity of, i, 55 and *note*

Sikandar, derivation of, in Ta-barí, vi, 19  
 derivation of, in Sháhnáma, vi, 19, 26  
 birth of, vi, 18, 26  
 adopted as his heir by Failakús, vi, 27  
 counselled by Arastálís, vi, 35  
 refuses tribute to Dárá, vi, 36  
 prepares for war with Dárá, vi, 37  
 invades, and defeats king of, Misr, vi, 30, 37  
   Írán, vi, 30, 37 *seq.*  
 visit of, to the camp of Dárá, vi, 38  
 invited to banquet with Dárá, vi, 40  
 takes the golden cups of Dárá, vi, 40  
 recognised, vi, 40  
 escapes, vi, 41  
 defeats Dárá, vi, 43, 44, 46  
 issues proclamation to the Íránians, vi, 44, 47  
 gives the spoil to his troops, vi, 44, 47  
 marches from 'Irák against Dárá, vi, 46  
 enters Istakhr, vi, 46  
 answers Dárá's letter, vi, 50  
 marches from Istakhr, vi, 51  
 hears of Dárá's murder, vi, 52  
 arrests Dárá's murderers, vi, 53  
 finds Dárá still living, vi, 53  
 promises to avenge Dárá, vi, 53  
 promises to carry out Dárá's last wishes, vi, 54  
 Dárá bestows Rúshanak upon, vi, 55, 86  
 laments for, and buries, Dárá, vi, 55, 56  
 executes Dárá's murderers, vi, 56  
 hailed as ruler by the Íránians, vi, 56

Sikandar, sends envoys to Ispahán and to the family of Dárá, and letters to the provinces, to announce his accession, vi, 57  
 crowned Sháh at Istakhr, vi, 59  
 Reign of, 158, vi, 60 *seq.*  
   Note on, vi, 60 *seq.*  
 diagram to illustrate Persian Romance of, vi, 84  
 inaugural address of, vi, 85  
 correspondence of, with the wife and daughter of Dárá, vi, 33 86, *seq.*  
 marries Rúshanak, vi, 90  
 invades Hind, vi, 98  
 Kaid and, vi, 61, 98  
 approaches Mílád, vi, 61, 98  
 inquires about the Four Wonders of Kaid, vi, 100  
 Four Wonders and other gifts sent by Kaid to, vi, 103  
 marries daughter of Kaid, vi, 104  
 sage of Kaid and, vi, 62, 104 *seq.*  
 principle of the cup explained to, vi, 109  
 conceals his treasures, vi, 110 and *note*  
 advances to Kannúj, vi, 110  
 troops of, protest, vi, 113  
 remonstrates with his troops, vi, 113  
 troops of, ask pardon, vi, 114  
 war of, with Fúr (Porus), vi, 67, 110 *seq.*  
 hears of Fúr's elephants, vi, 115  
   his device to overcome, vi, 115  
 challenges Fúr to single combat, vi, 116  
 slays Fúr, vi, 117  
 Fúr's troops submit to, vi, 118  
 becomes king of Hind, vi, 118



Sikandar, bestows Hind on Sawurg, vi, 118  
 visit of, to Mecca and the Kaaba, vi, 64, 67, 119 *seq.*  
 ends the rule of the Khuzá' in Arabia, vi, 120  
 sets up Nasr instead of the Khuzá', vi, 120,  
 goes to Judda, vi, 121  
 marches to Misr, vi, 121  
   welcomed by king of, vi, 121  
   stays for a year in, vi, 121  
 Kaidáfa (Candace) and, vi, vi, 65, 121 *seq.*  
 portrait of, obtained by Kaidáfa, vi, 122  
 Kaidáfa praised by Kabtún to, vi, 122  
 writes to Kaidáfa, vi, 123  
 Kaidáfa's answer to, vi, 123  
 assumes the name of Naitkún (Antigonus), vi, 66, 125 *seq.*  
 pleads (as Naitkún) for Kaidrúsh and his wife, vi, 126  
 goes (as Naitkún) to Kaidáfa, vi, 127  
 graciously received by Kaidáfa, vi, 128  
 audiences of, with Kaidáfa, vi, 128 *seq.*  
 recognised by Kaidáfa, vi, 129 *seq.*  
 delivers his message, as envoy, to Kaidáfa, vi 129, 134  
 covenant of, with Kaidáfa, vi, 132, 138  
 warned by Kaidáfa against Tainúsh, vi, 133  
 insulted by Tainúsh, vi, 134  
 counsels Kaidáfa about Tainúsh, vi, 135  
 covenant of, with Tainúsh, vi, 136  
 Kaidáfa's gifts to, vi, 140  
 returns with Tainúsh, vi, 141  
 welcomed by his troops, vi, 141

Sikandar, reveals himself to Tainúsh, vi, 142  
 entertains at a banquet, gives gifts to, and dismisses, Tainúsh, vi, 143  
 final message of, to Kaidáfa, vi, 143  
 Brahmins hear of the coming of, and write to, vi, 143  
 interview of, with the Brahmins, vi, 67, 144 *seq.*  
 quits the Brahmins, vi, 147  
 Fish-eaters (Ichthyophagi, *q.v.*) and, vi, 69, *seq.*, 147, 177  
 adventure of, with a whale, vi, 71, 147  
 sees gigantic reeds (bamboos), vi, 71, 148  
 attacked by snakes, scorpions, and boars, vi, 148  
 the people of Habash, vi, 149  
 the Narmpái, vi, 150  
 adventure of, with a dragon, vi, 71, 151  
 visits the temple of Dionysus, vi, 71, 152, 166  
 warned of his death, vi, 152, 161, 166  
 marches toward Harúm, the City of Women (Amazons *q.v.*), vi, 153 *seq.*  
 encounters snow and frost, vi, 156  
 encounters great heat, vi, 157  
 encounters the negroes, vi, 157  
 reaches and inspects Harúm, vi, 157  
 marches westward and finds a fair-haired race, vi, 73, 158  
 hears of the Gloom, *q.v.*, and of the Fount of Life, *q.v.*, and prepares to visit them, vi, 158  
 sets forth with Khizr as guide, vi, 159

- Sikandar, Khizr and, part company, vi, 160  
 fails to find the Fount of Life, vi, 160  
 interview of, with birds, vi, 160  
 interview of, with Isráfil, vi, 78, 161  
 emerges from the Gloom, vi, 162  
 marches eastward, vi, 163  
 hears of Yájúj and Májúj, vi, 163  
 barrier of, 160, i, 16; vi, 78, 164, 249  
 Speaking Tree visited by, vi, 167 *seq.* See Tree.  
 reaches "The World's End," vi, 168  
 receives gifts, vi, 169  
 expedition of, to Chín, vi, 80, 169 *seq.*  
 goes as his own ambassador to the Faghfúr, vi, 170  
 describes himself, vi, 171  
 Faghfúr's gifts to, vi, 173  
 departs with Faghfúr's envoy, vi, 173  
 identity of, discovered by the envoy, vi, 173  
 dismisses the envoy with gifts and a message to Faghfúr, vi, 174  
 arrives at Chaghwán, vi, 174  
 marches to Sind, vi, 175  
 defeats Bandáwa, chief of the Sindians, vi, 175  
 marches to Nímruz, vi, 175  
 receives gifts from the king of Yaman, vi, 175  
 meets Gúsh-bistar, vi, 177  
 carries off the treasures of Kai Khusráu, vi, 178  
 policy of, for safeguarding Rúm after his decease, vi, 81, 178, 197  
 adopts the advice of Arastáls, vi, 180
- Sikandar, arrives at Bábil, vi, 180  
 prodigious birth at, vi, 81, 180  
 consults the astrologers on, vi, 180  
 warned of his end, vi, 180  
 sickens, vi, 181  
 Will of, vi, 81, 181  
 grief of the troops for, vi, 183, 184  
 dies, vi, 183  
 dispute as to burial of, vi, 184  
 body of, taken to Iskandariya, vi, 185  
 sentences of sages over, vi, 82, 83, 185  
 cities of, vi, 83, 189  
 Zoroastrian and Sásanian view of, i, 59 and *note*, 61 *seq.*; vi, 15 and *note*, 224, 240; vii, 79 and *note*
- Silk, account of, vi, 204  
 introduction of, into the West, vi, 204
- Silk-worm. See Silk.
- Silvia, vestal, v, 293
- Símáh Barzín, scribe, Hurmuzl plots against, 170, viii, 85, *seq.*
- Simmas, chief herdsman of Ninus, v, 292
- Símurgh, mythical bird, 156, 157, i, 51; iii, 158, 313, 330; v, 117, 132 *seq.*, 166, 246, 248, 255  
 described, i, 235 and *note*, 253, 276, 302, 326, v, 132  
 nest of, on Mount Alburz, i, 241, 244, 250  
 young of, i, 242, 250, v, 132, 133  
 finds and brings up the infant Zál, i, 242  
 informs Zál of his parentage, i, 245  
 gives Zál one of her feathers, i, 246, 321  
 their efficacy, i, 246, 320  
 restores Zál to Sám, i, 247

Símurgh, referred to, i, 251  
 succours Rúdába, i, 320 *seq.*  
 foretells Rustam's future  
 greatness, i, 321  
 slain by Aslandiyár, v, 133  
 summoned to Rustam's aid  
 by Zál, v, 235 *seq.*  
 heals Rustam and Rakhsh,  
 v, 237  
 instructs Rustam how to  
 overcome Asfandiyár, v,  
 237  
 Sind, the river Indus and the  
 parts adjacent, i, 113; ii,  
 285; iii, 10 *note*, 117, 185,  
 216, 238 iv, 65, 71; v,  
 75, 180, 203, 277; vi, 113;  
 vii, 110, 112, 390  
 king of, iii, 185; vi, 113,  
 entertained by Bahrám  
 Gúr, vii, 140 *seq.*  
 kings of, send tribute to  
 Gushtásp, v, 75  
 chiefs of, vi, 123  
 warriors of, vi, 132, 137  
 Sikandar marches to, vi, 175  
 Sindbad, the sailor, vi, 71  
 lands on a whale, vi, 71  
 Sinde, river, iii, 10 and *note*  
 Sindian, Sindians, 160, vii, 126  
 defeated by Sikandar, vi,  
 175  
 Síndukht, wife of Mihráb and  
 mother of Rúdába, 141, i,  
 259, 299  
 Mihráb praises Zál to, i, 260  
 discovers the loves of Zál  
 and Rúdába, i, 281  
 reproaches Rúdába, i, 282  
 informs Mihráb about Zál  
 and Rúdába, i, 284  
 goes with gifts to Sám, i,  
 300 *seq.*  
 well received by Sám, i, 302  
 invites Sám to visit Kábul,  
 i, 305  
 returns to Kábul, i, 306  
 hears of Zál's success with  
 Minúchihir, i, 315  
 felicitates Rúdába, i, 315

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Vol. v., p. 30.

Síndukht, Mihráb and, prepare  
 to welcome Sám and Zál,  
 i, 315, 317  
 entertain Sám and Zál, i,  
 317 *seq.*  
 visit Sám in Sístán, i, 319  
 Sinjibú, first historical Khán of  
 the Turks, vii, 317  
 relations of, with Núshir-  
 wán, vii, 317  
 Haitálhans and, vii, 317  
 Sipahram, Túránian hero, 151;  
 ii, 228, 229, 388; iv, 26,  
 103  
 chosen to fight with Hajír,  
 iv, 97  
 slain by Hajír, iv, 104  
 Sipand (Spen-tó-dáta, *q.v.*, Spen-  
 dyad, Sapad, White  
 Castle), mountain north-  
 west of Nishápúr, 142, i,  
 377; ii, 118; v, 30, 116,  
 117  
 Malcolm's identification and  
 description of, <sup>1</sup> i, 236  
 Zál bids Rustam take, i, 329  
 described, i, 329  
 taken by Rustam, i, 331  
 treasures of, i, 331, 332  
 hold of, destroyed by Zál's  
 orders, i, 333  
 Sipandármad, ameshaspenta,  
*q.v.*, iii, 287, 328; v, 18  
 month, i, 89; iv, 252; ix,  
 70, 122  
 day, i, 88, 89, viii, 331  
 Sipanjáb (Farghána?), region, i,  
 375; ii, 241, 342, 344, 345  
 358; iii, 151  
 Sipansár, Iránian warrior, viii, 293  
 Sístán = Nímruz = Zábulistán, <sup>2</sup>  
 144, 149, 155; i, 319;  
 ii, 80, 335, 365; iii, 165,  
 166, 191, 207, 321, 356;  
 iv, 14, 278; v, 13, 17, 29,  
 85, 86, 89, 94, 173, 174,  
 201, 220, 248, 261, 264,  
 267; vi, 32, 198; vii, 214  
 former capital of, i, 4  
 lake of, i, 4; v, 239 *note*

<sup>2</sup> See p. 333 *note*.

Sístán, origin of name, i, 19  
 invaded by Shamásás and  
 Khazarwán, i, 358  
 mourning in, for Rustam, v,  
 278  
 invaded by Bahman, v, 284  
*seq.*  
 Sitír, Persian measure of weight,  
 iii, 184  
 Sitúh, Túránian hero, v, 86, 87  
 goes as a spy to Frán and  
 reports to Arjásp, v, 86,  
 87  
 Siyah Chasm, slave of Farrukh-  
 zád, ix, 62  
 handmaid of Farrukhzád  
 and, ix, 62  
 imprisoned, ix, 62  
 released, ix, 62  
 poisons Farrukhzád, ix, 63  
 Siyámak, son of Gaiúmart, 139,  
 i, 117, 119  
 slain by the Black Dív, i, 120  
 lamentations over, i, 120  
 Siyámak, Túránian hero, 151, iv,  
 97  
 chosen to fight with Guráza,  
 iv, 97  
 slain by Guráza, iv, 100  
 Siyávaksh. *See* Siyáwush.  
 Siyáwashána. *See* Siyáwush.  
 Siyáwush, son of Kai Káuś, and  
 father of Farúd and Kai  
 Khusrau, 144-148, ; i, 55,  
 92 ; ii, 3, 25, 82, 104 *note*  
 187 *seq.*, 335, 338 *seq.*, 346  
*seq.*, 363, 371, 372, 374  
*seq.*, 383, 386, 388, 396,  
 403, 411 ; iii, 8, 13, 18, 19,  
 21, 22, 29, 39, 42, 43, 51,  
 52, 57, 66, 67, 71, 72, 87,  
 93, 99, 112, 117, 118, 137,  
 146, 148, 149, 156, 163,  
 183, 197, 199, 200, 201, 203  
*seq.*, 211, 214, 226, 237,  
 238, 256, 283, 289, 297,  
 307, 315, 324, 347 ; iv, 7,  
 17, 18, 34, 50, 51, 70 *seq.*,  
 89, 90, 95, 96, 102, 109,  
 120, 127, 129, 130, 137,  
 152, 159, 162, 167, 168,

Siyáwush—*cont.*

172, 201, 202, 204, 205,  
 214, 215, 221, 223, 231,  
 235, 240, 250, 252, 257,  
 267, 270, 271, 283, 285,  
 289, 299, 305, 307, 310 ;  
 v, 174, 176, 192, 208, 272 ;  
 viii, 104, 349, 395 *note* ;  
 ix, 25 and *note*, 26 *note*,  
 103  
 mother of, 144, ii, 3  
 Story of, 144, ii, 188 *seq.*  
*Note on*, ii, 188 *seq.*  
 good example of Fir-  
 dausi's method, ii, 188  
 Prelude to, ii, 191  
 identical with Cambyases,  
 the father of Cyrus the  
 Great, in legend, ii, 191  
 adventure of the mother of,  
 ii, 193  
 destined to misfortune from  
 birth, ii, 196  
 brought up by Rustam, ii,  
 196  
 horoscope of, ii, 196, 205,  
 234  
 returns to court, ii, 197  
 made ruler of Kuhistán, ii,  
 199  
 mourns for his mother's  
 death, ii, 199  
 temptation of, by Súdába,  
 ii, 200 *seq.*  
 marches against Afrásiyáb,  
 ii, 225 *seq.*  
 demands hostages of Afrá-  
 siyáb, ii, 239 *seq.*  
 goes over to Afrásiyáb, ii,  
 258 *seq.*  
 plays at polo with Afrásiyáb  
 ii, 264  
 archery of, ii, 266, 293  
 marriage of, with Jaríra, ii,  
 268 *seq.*  
 marriage of, with Farangís,  
 ii, 270 *seq.*  
 entertained by Pfrán, ii, 278  
 builds cities, ii, 278 *seq.*  
 consults the astrologers, ii,  
 282

Siyáwush, foretells the future to Pírán, ii, 282 *seq.*  
 entertains Pírán, ii, 287  
 entertains Garsíwaz, ii, 290 *seq.*  
 plays at polo with Garsíwaz, ii, 292  
 challenged by Garsíwaz, ii, 294  
 overthrows Gurwí and Dámúr, ii, 295  
 slandered by Garsíwaz to Afrásiyáb, ii, 296 *seq.*  
 summoned to court by Afrásiyáb, ii, 300 *seq.*  
 betrayed by Garsíwaz, ii, 301 *seq.*  
 excuses himself from going to court, ii, 306  
 passion of, ii, 307 *seq.*  
 foretells the future to Farangís, ii, 310 *seq.*  
 charges and turns loose Bihzád, ii, 312  
 attacked and taken by Afrásiyáb, ii, 314  
 execution of, ii, 320  
     referred to, iv, 268  
 Blood of (plant), ii, 321  
 birth-mark of, iii, 49  
 mail of, iii, 58, 60, 61, 69, 81, iv, 40 *seq.*, 51  
 murderer of=Afrásiyáb, iv, 198  
 garth of=Siyáwushgird, iv, 238  
 goods of, viii, 148, 151  
 Siyáwush, Iránian chief, 172; viii, 128, 163, 187, 233  
     son of=Bahrám, viii, 247  
 Siyáwush, wild duck, ii, 104 *note*  
 Siyáwushgird, city built by Siyáwush, 145, 146, 153; ii, 301, 314, 373; iv, 250, 252  
 building and description of, ii, 285 *seq.*  
 becomes the home of Kai Khusrau, ii, 333  
 referred to, iv, 238

Skirts, binding together of, in battle, iv, 85 and *note*, 177 and *note*, 209  
 Slavs, viii, 191  
 Smerdis, the false, v, 11; vi, 207  
 Snakes=Arabs, ix, 91  
 Snowstorm, iii, 108  
     Iránian host distressed by, iii, 71, 128; v, 137; vi, 156  
     paladins of Kai Khusrau lost in, iv, 308 *seq.*  
 Sohrab and Rustam, Matthew Arnold's, ii, 118  
 Sol, planet, viii, 395  
 Soma. *See* Homa.  
 Son of Firdausí, death of, viii, 190  
 Song, of a dív, ii, 31  
     of Rustam, ii, 51  
     of Asfandiyár, v, 129  
     of the daughter of Barzín, vii, 52  
     of the daughter of Máhiyár, vii, 60, 61, 66  
 Sophia, Empress, her treatment of Narses, viii, 76  
 Sorcerer, a Jewish, brings about the death of Núshirwán's minister, Mahbúd, vii, 320 *seq.*  
 Sorceress, Rustam and a, 143, ii, 50 *seq.*  
     Súdába and a, 144, ii, 214 *seq.*  
     Asfandiyár and a, 156, v, 128 *seq.*  
 Sóshyans, the Zoroastrian Mes-siah, i, 131  
 Souterrain, ii, 137 iv, 212  
 Spain (Andalús), vi, 66  
 Spand-dát (Spento-dáta, Asfandiyár), v, 24 *seq.*  
 Span-dát-náma (Asfandiyár-náma), v, 26, 27  
 Speaking Tree, the, 160. *See* Tree.  
 Speech, modes of, viii, 30  
 Spendyád, mountain. *See* Spentó-dáta.  
 Spentó-dáta (Spand-dát, Asfandiyár *q.v.*), v, 12

Spentó-dáta (Spendyad, Sapad, Sipand *q.v.*), mountain north-west of Nishápúr, ii, 118; v, 30, 116, 117

Sphinés. *See* Calanus.

Spica, star, i, 245, 271; viii, 379

Spitama, clan name of Zarduhsht (Zoroaster), i, 236; iv, 15

Spityura, brother of Yima (Jamshíd), i, 130

Spring, a, 143

of Sav, *q.v.*, 163

Sróvbar, mythical serpent, i, 172

Stages, the Seven, 156. *See* Asfandiyár.

Stateira. *See* Barsine.

Steed, piece in chess. *See* Horse.

Steeds, iron, Sikandar's, 159, vi, 115

filled with naphtha, vi, 115

Fúr's elephants and troops routed by, vi, 116

Stone, the Black. *See* Black.

Strabo, Greek geographer (born c. 63 B.C.), vi, 68, 81

Strength, handgrip as test of. *See* Handgrip.

Subuktigín, father of Sultán Mahmúd, account of, i, 20

title of, i, 21

referred to by, i, 100, 114

Súdába, daughter of the king of Ilámávarán and wife of

Kai Káuś, 143-146, ii, 3,

79, 188, 189, 200, *seq.* 225,

249, 257, 335, 339

description of, ii, 86

marries Kai Káuś, ii, 88

imprisoned with Kai Káuś by her father, ii, 91

released by Rustam, ii, 97

temptation of Siyáwush by, ii, 200 *seq.*

slain by Rustam, ii, 340

referred to, v, 174

Súfarai (Sarkhán, Sukhrá, Seoses?), 166, vii, 170

and *note*, 171, 173 *seq.*;

viii, 72, 75, 168, 285

appointed minister to the regent Balásh, vii, 164

Súfarai, glorification of, in Íránian tradition, vii, 170

account of, vii, 173, 184, 185

resolves to avenge Pírúz, vii, 173

writes to Balásh, vii, 173

marches on Marv, vii, 174

correspondence of, with Khúshnawáz, vii, 174

defeats Khúshnawáz, vii, 177

gives the spoil to the troops, vii, 177

Khúshnawáz sues for peace to, vii, 178

consults his troops, vii, 178

resolves to make peace, vii, 179

replies to Khúshnawáz, vii, 179

returns to Írán in triumph, vii, 180

welcomed by Balásh and the chiefs, vii, 181

greatness of, vii, 181, 190

dethrones Balásh and makes Kubád Sháh, vii, 182

proverb concerning, vii, 185

identical with Rizmíhr, vii, 185

fall of, vii, 190 *seq.*

Kubád's letter to, vii, 193

arrest of, vii, 193

property of, confiscated, vii, 194

conveyed to Sháh Kubád, vii, 194

executed, vii, 195

son of, (Rizmíhr), vii, 196

Súfis, vi, 59 and *note*

Sughd (Sughdiana, Samarkand), district and city in Turk-

istán between the Oxus

and Jaxartes, i, 19; ii,

230, 232, 237, 241, 249,

358; iii, 244; iv, 65, 188,

189, 255; vii, 331, 337,

358, 359

Sughdiana, vi, 72. *See* Sughd.

Suhráb, son of Rustam and Tahmina daughter of the king of Samangan, 144, ii, 4, 25; iv, 296; v, 204; vi, 325  
 Story of, 144, ii, 118 *seq.*  
   Note on, ii, 118  
   purely episodic, ii, 118  
   Sir John Malcolm's version of, ii, 118  
   Matthew Arnold's version of, ii, 118  
   Prelude to, ii, 119  
 lament of, for the loss of Gurdáfrid, ii, 119, *note*  
 questions his mother as to his father, ii, 126  
 charges of, sired by Rakhsh, ii, 128  
 Afrásiyáb's plot against, ii, 129  
   gifts to, ii, 130  
 invades Írán, ii, 130  
 takes Hajír prisoner, ii, 131  
 beguiled by Gurdáfrid, ii, 133  
 described by Gazhdaham, ii, 136  
 sees from White Castle the Íránian host advancing, ii, 148  
 seen while feasting by Rustam, ii, 150  
 hears of the death of Zhanda Razm, ii, 151  
 misled by Hajír, ii, 152 *seq.*  
 overthrows the camp-en closure of Káús, ii, 160  
 challenged by Rustam, ii, 161  
 Rustam described by, ii, 154, 169  
   advances of, to Rustam, ii, 169  
 spares Rustam's life, ii, 170  
 again encounters Rustam, ii, 172  
 makes himself known to Rustam, ii, 173  
 last requests of, to Rustam, ii, 175  
 mourning for, ii, 182 *seq.*

Súkhrá. *See* Súfarai.  
 Súkhta, treasure, viii, 406 and *note*  
 Sultán. *See* Mahmúd.  
 Sumai, viii, 195  
 Sun, on the Nature of the, 139, i, 105  
   one of the seven planets, i, 72  
   in astrology, i, 188, 310 and *note*  
   total eclipse of, vii, 159  
 Sunday, viii, 378, 380  
 Sunnites, orthodox Muhammadans, i, 13  
   origin of, i, 13  
 Súr, city near Ispahán, 176, iv, 146, 180; ix, 74, 89, 95, 97, 100, 116, 118  
 Sura. *See* Shúráb.  
 Surkha, son of Afrásiyáb, 146, i, 92; ii, 344 *seq.*  
   taken prisoner by Farámarz, ii, 345  
   death of, ii, 347  
 Súrśán (Záb-i-Khusrau, Rúmiya q.v.) city built by Núshwán, 168, vii, 317, 327, 328  
 Surúsh, angel, the messenger of Urmuzd, 153, 172, i, 51, 175, 182; ii, 288, 289, 364, 408; iii, 277; iv, 139, 203, 265, 285, 307; v, 170, 253; vi, 199 *note*, 372; vii, 38; viii, 173  
   warns Gaiúmart against the Black Dív, i, 119  
   bids Gaiúmart avenge Siyámak, i, 120  
   visits and instructs Farídún, i, 159  
   counsels Farídún about Zahhák, i, 169  
   appears to Gúdarz in a dream, ii, 363  
   referred to, iv, 273  
   informs Kai Khusrau that his prayer is granted, iv, 281

Surúsh, angel, bids Kai Khusrau  
 appoint Luhrásp as his  
 successor, iv, 281  
 may be assumed to have  
 accompanied Kai Khus-  
 rau on his pilgrimage, iv,  
 139, 303, 308  
 saves Khusrau Parwíz from  
 Bahrám Chúbína, viii,  
 189, 299  
 Surúsh, day, i, 88; vi, 411  
 Surúsh, astrologer, vi, 372  
 takes Bahrám Gúr's horo-  
 scope, vi, 376  
 Súsanak, a miller's daughter,  
 vii, 32 and *note*  
 taken to wife by Bahrám  
 Gúr, vii, 33  
 Susiana (*Khúzistán q.v.*), vi, 295,  
 321; vii, 184  
 Sviatoi, island lying off western  
 shore of the Caspian, i, 58  
*note*  
 Swat, river in Northern India,  
 vi, 65  
 Swyamvara, Indian form of  
 marriage, iv, 316  
 Syávarshána (*Siyáwush q.v.*),  
 ii, 189; iv, 137  
 Syria (*Shám*), country, ii, 80;  
 vi, 30; viii, 193  
 raided by Persians, viii, 41  
 Syriac, version of the Pseudo-  
 Callisthenes, vi, 14, 16, 18,  
 30, 31 *seq.*, 61, 63, 65, 66,  
 68, 71, 72, 74, 78 *seq.*  
 Christian Legend of Alex-  
 ander, vi, 14, 15, 74, 78, 84  
 quoted, vi, 15  
 metrical version of, vi  
 15, 78, 84  
 Syrian, ix, 66

## T

TABÁK, Íránian chief, 161, vi, 202,  
 225  
 suspected by Ardshír Pápa-  
 kán, vi, 225

Tabák, justifies himself, vi 226  
 Ardshír Pápakán and, de-  
 feat Bahman, vi, 226  
 buries Ardawán, vi, 229  
 advises Ardshír Pápakán to  
 marry the daughter of  
 Ardawán, vi, 229  
 Tabarí, Arabic historian (A.D.  
 838-923), iii, 108; vi, 14  
*note*, 16, 19, 30, 198, 200,  
 291 *note*, 310, 313, 315,  
 321, 326; vii, 3 *seq.*, 156,  
 159, 160, 170, 171, 185  
 186, 217; viii, 73, 75 *seq.*,  
 188; ix, 4, 56, 61, 64,  
 69  
 account of death of Rustam  
 by, v, 261  
 etymology of Dáráb, v,  
 297 *note*  
 Sásánians, vi, 14 *note*  
 Alexander's battles with  
 Darius, vi, 30  
 Yájúj and Májúj, vi, 78  
 rise of Sásanian dynasty,  
 vi, 198  
 Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 198,  
 203  
 genealogies of Pápak, vi,  
 200  
 Worm, vi, 205, 206  
 Haftwád, vi, 205, 206  
 length of Ardshír Pápa-  
 kán's reign, vi, 254  
 Ardawán's daughter, vi,  
 255  
 Shápúr, son of Ardshír  
 Pápakán, vi, 255, 257  
 death of Shápúr, son of  
 Shápúr, vi, 365  
 Bahrám, son of Shápúr,  
 vi, 368  
 Yazdagird, son of Shápúr,  
 vi, 371 *seq.*  
 Kubád and Nushírwán's  
 reform of taxation, vii,  
 183 *note*, 215  
 Turks, vii, 317  
 Persian, vii, 5; viii, 42, 73  
*seq.*, 187 *seq.*; ix, 4, 5, 43,  
 70



- Tabarí, Persian, story from, concerning Kubád, vii, 183  
*note*  
Arabic, viii, 42, 73, 187, 190  
195; ix, 4, 5, 7, 43, 50
- Tabaristán (Mázandarán, *q.v.*),  
i, 39, 40; ix, 74  
Firdausí's stay in, i, 39  
chief of, i, 39, 40  
patron of Firdausí, i, 39
- Table of Contents, General, ix, 139
- Tables, Genealogical. *See* Genealogical.
- Tacitus, Roman historian (A D. 55-120), iii, 10 and *note*, 15; vi, 73
- Tahmásp, father of Zav, i, 90, 369, 370; ii, 11; iv, 283
- Tahmína, daughter of the king of Samangán and mother of Suhráb, 144; ii, 4, 118  
precautions of, for her son's safety, ii, 127, 140, 149  
mourning of, for Suhráb, ii, 184 *seq.*  
death of, ii, 186
- Tahmúras, Sháh, 140, i, 42, 90, 91, 214; ii, 168; iii, 293; iv, 133; vii, 9 and *note*, 273; viii, 277, 332, 376; ix, 25  
Reign of, 140, i, 125 *seq.*  
Note on, i, 125  
Binder of the Dív (Áhriman), i, 125, 127, 214  
Áhriman and, legend of, i, 125  
culture hero, i, 125, 126  
dívs rebel against, i, 127  
conquers and enslaves the dívs, i, 127  
taught writing by the dívs, i, 127  
dies, i, 128  
Firdausí's reflections on, i, 128  
horn of, iii, 335
- Tainúsh (Chaiogós, Kerátór, Kanír), son of Kaidáfa, 159; vi, 66, 67, 134 *seq.*  
Kaidáfa warns Sikandar against, vi, 133
- Tainúsh, Fúr's son in law, vi, 133  
insults Sikandar, vi, 134  
Kaidáfa chides, vi, 135  
Kaidáfa and Sikandar consult about, vi, 135  
makes a covenant with Sikandar, vi, 136  
accompanies Sikandar on his return, vi, 141  
Sikandar discovers himself to, vi, 142  
asks grace of Sikandar, vi, 142  
pardoned by Sikandar, vi, 142  
entertained at a banquet, presented with gifts, and dismissed, by Sikandar, vi, 143
- Tainúsh (Theodosius), 163, vi, 372, 389, 404  
goes to Yazdagird as ambassador, vi, 389  
asked by Bahrám Gúr to intercede with Yazdagird for him, vi, 389  
obtains Bahrám Gúr's release, vi, 390, 404
- Táír (Daizan, *q.v.*), Arab chief, 162; vi, 3, 322, 324, 330 *seq.*
- Taisafún (Ctesiphon, *q.v.*), 168, 174; vi, 397; vii, 188, 194, 361, 363; viii, 53, 90, 109 *note*, 118, 173, 175, 180, 182, 229, 241; ix, 9, 10, 90  
Ardshír Pápakan goes to, vi, 245  
Shápúr's bridge at, vi, 321, 329  
sacked by Táír, vi, 330  
Shápúr sends spies to, vi, 346  
Cæsar defeated and taken prisoner by Shápúr at, vi, 347  
Núshirwán returns to, viii, 53  
Bahrám Chúbína marches from province of, viii, 106

- Taisafún, Khusrau Parwíz im-  
prisoned at viii, 421; ix, 9  
Bárbad visits Khusrau Par-  
wíz at, ix, 29
- Táj, viii, 71
- Tákdis, Throne of, 174, viii, 391  
account of, viii, 391  
added to by Jámásp, viii,  
392
- Takht (*or* Ták)-i-Bústán, place  
some four miles north-  
east of Kirmánsháh in the  
Persian province of Arde-  
lan and famous for its  
Sásanian bas-reliefs, vi,  
257; viii, 192  
inscription at, vi, 257
- Takht-i-Khusrau. *See* Madá'in.
- Takht-i-Sulaimán (Shíz, *q.v.*),  
viii, 189
- Talhand, Indian prince, 169,  
vii, 394, 396 *seq.*  
Story of Gav and, 169, vii,  
394, *seq.*  
mother of. *See* Gav.  
birth of, vii, 396  
tutor of, vii, 397, 398, 401,  
402, 408, 410, 414  
rivalry between Gav and,  
vii, 397 *seq.*  
war between Gav and, vii,  
404 *seq.*  
rejects Gav's offer of accom-  
modation, vii, 406, 409  
death of, foretold, vii, 408,  
413, 418  
defeated by Gav, vii, 412  
accepts Gav's proposal for a  
decisive battle, vii, 415  
defeat and death of, vii,  
416
- Tálikán, city and stronghold  
east of Marv, ii, 228; iv,  
65, 255  
ceded by Pírúz to the Haitá-  
lians, vii, 156, 160  
importance of, vii, 156
- Tallmán, Iránian hero, i, 211, 217  
252  
meets Kai Khusrau in Sughd  
vi, 255
- Talisman, Caesar's, 172  
described, viii, 271, 275  
deceives Persian envoys,  
viii, 272  
mastered by Kharrád, viii,  
274
- Tamarisk, plant, i, 4; v, 240,  
243, 246, 247, 256  
branch of, fatal to Asfandi-  
yár, v, 239 and *note*
- Tammísha (Kús), town in Eastern  
Mázandarán, formerly a  
seat of Farídún's, between  
Sáriyah and Astarábád, i,  
177, 216, 230
- Tamúz, viii, 77 *note*
- Tanais, river, iv, 315 and *note*
- Tarak, river (the Atrak, the  
boundary between Gur-  
gán and Dahistán, or the  
Turk flowing into the  
Jaxartes west of Tásh-  
kand?), vii, 164, 165, 359
- Taráz, city now in ruins, north-  
east of Táshkand near the  
present town of Aulieh-  
Ata, i, 257, 266; v, 157;  
vi, 268; viii, 370; ix, 41  
Cypress of=Rúdába, i, 269  
Idols of, ii, 123, 206; iii,  
248; iv, 218; viii, 370
- Tartary, iv, 156
- Taurus, constellation, iii, 168;  
iv, 177; vi, 151; vii, 282
- Tausar, high priest under Ard-  
shír Pápakán, i, 62  
letter of, i, 63
- Tawába, Iránian hero, iii, 25
- Tawurg, Túránian hero, iv, 188  
sent on an expedition by  
Afrásiyáb, iv, 188  
defeated by Rustam, iv, 193
- Taxation, 167, vii, 224
- Firdausi's exemption from,  
i, 35, 39; ix, 121  
reform of, by Kubád, vii, 183  
*note*, 215, 225  
Núshirwán, vii, 215, 225  
*seq.*
- Taxila, Indian city, vi, 63  
situation of, vi, 62

- Tazháv, an Iránian deserter to, and son-in-law of, Afrási-yáb, 148; iii, 27, 28  
sends Kabúda to spy out the Iránian host, iii, 73  
paileys with Gív, iii, 75  
defeated, iii, 77  
flees with Ispanwí, iii, 77  
pursued by Bízhan, iii, 77  
escapes to Afrásiyáb, iii, 78  
attacks Bahráw, iii, 100  
taken prisoner by Gív, iii, 102
- Temperaments, the four, vii, 381  
symbolised in the game of nard, vii, 381
- Tennyson, quoted, v, 281
- Tharthai, river in northern Mesopotamia, vi, 322
- Theodore, brother of Heraclius, viii, 194
- Theodosiopolis, city in Armenia, vii, 187
- Theodosius II. (Tainúsh, *q.v.*), Eastern Roman Emperor (A.D. 401-450), vi, 372; vii, 187
- Theodosius (Niyátús, *q.v.*), viii, 189
- Theophanes, Greek Chronicler, account of last days of Khusrau Parwíz by, ix, 6
- Thermodon, river on the southern shores of the Euxine, vi, 72
- Thornbrake town, the world, i, 310
- Thraétaona, i, 171 *seq.*; ii, 81
- Thrita, i, 171 *seq.*
- Tiber, river, v, 294
- Tiberius II., Eastern Roman Emperor, vii, 212; viii, 42
- Tigris (Arwand), river, vi, 294  
322; viii, 193, 194; ix, 67  
small, the, vi, 199 and *note*  
lower, vi, 291 *note*  
bridge over, vi, 321
- Tihrán, city, ii, 28; iii, 109; v, 14, 18  
edition of Sháhnáma, i, 76
- Tír, genius, iii, 287, 328  
month and day, i, 88, viii, 394
- Tírí, eunuch of Gúzihr, vi, 198
- Tirmid, city and fortress north of the Oxus (Jihún) where the route from Balkh to Samarkand crosses that river, ii, 229, 258; iv, 65; vii, 156, 157, 331
- Tírúdi, village in the neighbourhood of Istakhr (Persepolis), and the birth-place of Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 198
- Tishtar, Sirius, i, 235
- Tobit, Book of, iii, 272
- Toll-house and ford of Zark, ix, 100 and *note*, 116
- Tollman, Gív and the, 146; ii, 390  
Gushtásp and the, iv, 324, 332 and *note*, 334 *seq.*, 344 *seq.*, 351
- Trade-routes, ancient, i, 11, 57
- Traitana, i, 7, 8, 171 *seq.*
- Trajan, Roman Emperor (A.D. 98-117), vi, 322  
siege of Hatra by, vi, 322
- Translation, the principles adopted in the present, i, 76 *seq.*
- Translators of the Sháhnáma, list of previous, i, 87
- Treasure, of Jamshíd, 164, vii, 36  
Kai Kháirau, 160, iv, 295; vi, 178  
Sikandar, vi, 110 and *note*  
Khusrau Parwíz, viii, 406
- Tree, the Speaking, 160, vi, 79  
described, vi, 167 *seq.*  
Sikandar visits, vi, 167, *seq.*  
warns Sikandar of his death, vi, 168, 169
- Triad of evil, Zoroastrian, i, 59  
and *note*
- Tribal, or Part, Kings, the, 160, vi, 180, 203, 204, 225, 252, 253  
origin of, vi, 179, 181, 210  
character of their rule, vi, 197, 198  
number of, vi, 198

Tribal, or Part Kings, Ardawán, the chief of, vi, 201  
 Firdausí on, vi, 210  
 Tribute, Rúm's to Írán, vi, 24; vii, 214, 215, 248, 262, 333, 338, 362; viii, 52, 53  
 Trita, i, 7, 8, 171 *seq.*  
 Tshatrang-Námak, Pahlaví text, vii, 380, 381  
 Tughrál, a species of falcon, vii, 49  
   described, vii, 48  
   Bahrá'm Gúr's, vii, 48 *seq.*  
 Tukhár, Farúd's counsellor, 147, iii, 43 *seq.*  
   tells Farúd the blazons of the Íránian chiefs, iii, 44  
   counsels Farúd, iii, 47, 52 *seq.*  
 Tukhár, king of Dahistán, iv, 148  
   commands with Fariburz the troops from Kháwar, iv, 148  
   slays a scout from Makrán, iv, 242  
 Tukhár, Íránian chief, viii, 228  
   takes letter to Cæsar, viii, 263  
 Tukhár, Íránian general, conspires against Khusráw Parwiz, viii, 414  
   releases Shírwí, viii, 415  
   refuses to help Píruz against Guráz, ix, 48  
 Tukhára, Íránian warrior, viii, 296  
   son of, viii, 314  
 Tumaspa (Tahmásp, *q.v.*), i, 369  
 Túr, second son of Farídún and ruler of Túrán, 140, 141, i, 42, 90 *seq.*, 335, 337, 342, 344, 362; ii, 8, 17, 19, 99, 237, 262, 297, 302, 303, 318, 327, 363, 390; iii, 7, 30, 37, 115, 197, 245, 246; iv, 11, 34, 66, 69, 70, 78, 166, 167, 188, 201, 203, 206, 269, 272, 290; v, 42, 206, 261, 284; vi, 353; vii, 73; viii, 266, 300, 376 *note*, 378; ix, 103  
   racial significance of, i, 54

Túr, etymology of, i, 174  
   naming of, i, 187  
   horoscope of, i, 188  
   made ruler over the Turk-mans and Chín, i, 189  
   plots with Salm, i, 190  
   Salm and, demand the abdication of Íraj, i, 191  
   Íraj visits, i, 198  
   reception of Íraj by, i, 198, *seq.*  
   slay Íraj, i, 201  
   send Íraj's head to Farídún, i, 202  
   hear of Minúchíhr, i, 208  
   send an embassy to Farídún, i, 208  
   receive Farídún's reply, i, 213 *seq.*  
   prepare for war, i, 215  
   parley of, with Kubád, i, 217  
   Salm and, worsted by Minúchíhr, i, 220  
   plan a night-surprise, i, 220  
   worsted, i, 221  
   slain by Minúchíhr, i, 221  
   head of, sent to Farídún, i, 222  
   Fire-temple at Bukhárá built by, iv, 255  
   daughter of, iv, 304  
   =Túrán, iv, 51, 164  
   chief of=Húmán, iv, 51  
   prince of=Shída, iv, 164  
 Túrán (Turkistán), the legendary patrimony of Túr, *q.v.* and a general name for the non-Íránian regions north of the Oxus (Jíhún), 142, 146, 148, 152, 153, 165-167; i, 189, 229, 351, 371, ii, 9, 18, 25, 79, 82, 101, 112 and *passim*; iii, 8, 11, 15, 25, 29 and *passim*; iv, 10, 15, 17, 19, 20, and *passim*; v, 12, 20 *seq.*, 25, 32, 41, 43, 45, 53, 61, and *passim*; vi, 43, 182, 398; vii, 43, 92, 136, 156, 178; viii, 118, 123, 130, 242,

Túrán—*cont.*

- 329, 331, 349, 350, 376,  
405, 407; ix, 11, 89, 99  
monarch of Chín and = Afrá-  
siyáb, ii, 99  
host of, ii, 110  
lord of = Mahmúd, iv, 142  
Túránians (Turkmen), 143, 148,  
149, 151-153, 155, 165;  
i, 9, 10, 54; ii, 11, 81, 265;  
iii, 30, 115, 320, 322; iv,  
7, 81, 129, 223, 227; v,  
13, 20, 116; vii, 90; viii,  
123, 320  
historical relations of, with  
the Íránians, i, 16  
Turk, Turks, i, 10, 20; viii, 95,  
103, 121, 135, 136, 138  
*seq.*, 142, 164, 169, 170,  
189, 316, 320, 349, 352;  
ix, 70, 96 *seq.*, 105, 114,  
117, 120  
confused with the Haitá-  
lians, vii, 4  
historical appearance of, vii,  
317  
Tabarí on, vii, 317  
defeat the Haitálians, vii,  
332  
described, vii, 332  
War of, with Persians, viii,  
72  
prophesied, viii, 98  
= Sáwa, viii, 98  
defeated, viii, 126  
find Sáwa's corpse, viii, 127  
sorcerer, sends ill dream to  
Bahrám Chúbína, viii,  
121, 128  
put to death, viii, 129  
heads of chiefs of, sent to  
Hurmuzd, viii, 130  
retreat to Túrán, viii, 131  
three, the, viii, 187, 204  
one of, attacks Khusrau  
Parwíz, viii, 220  
reproved by Bahrám  
Chúbína, viii, 221  
lead night-attack on Khus-  
rau Parwíz, viii, 227  
= Makátúra, viii, 319

- Turk, Turks = Kulún, viii, 345  
defeated by Yalán-sína, viii,  
353  
Turkhán, Túránian hero, v, 151  
sent with troops to recon-  
noitre outside the Brazen  
Hold, v, 151  
Turkish, ix, 87  
Turkistán (Túrán), 147, ii, 19;  
iii, 109, 228; iv, 233; v,  
55; vi, 179, 278, 280, 397;  
vii, 84, 92, 118, 334, 365;  
viii, 324, 336, 363, 376,  
377, 407  
Turkman, Turkmen (Túrán-  
ians), 148, 155, i, 20, 189,  
263, 343, 352, 357; ii,  
12, 14, 15, 92, 100 and  
*passim*; iii, 30, 63, 81, 93,  
and *passim*; iv, 10, 13,  
15, 19, 20, 22, 29 and  
*passim*; v, 22, 25, 36, 39,  
40, 44, 47, 51, 52, 61, 72,  
90 *seq.*, 98 *seq.*, 104 *seq.*,  
108, 110, 113, 114, 116,  
135, 152, 157, 158, 171,  
173, 206, 254; vii, 48, 88,  
92, 97, 177, 179, 239, 344,  
364; viii, 377; ix, 25, 76,  
94  
slave-boy of Zál meets the  
damsels of Rúdába, i, 263  
*seq.*  
make peace with Zav, i, 371  
army of, surrenders to As-  
fandiyár, v, 72, 113  
monarch of = Arjásp, v, 74  
led by Kuhram, storm  
Balkh, burn the Fire-  
temple, and slay Zar-  
duhsht and the priests, v,  
92, 93  
take Gushtásp's daughters  
captive, v, 93  
kingdom of, offered by  
Asfandiyár to Gurgsár in  
return for faithful service,  
v, 120  
ordered by Arjásp to march  
out from the Brazen Hold  
in force to attack the in-

Turkman, Turkmans—*cont.*

vaders under Bishútán, v,  
152

hear the cries of the Írán-  
ian watch in the Brazen  
Hold, v, 155

refused quarter by Asfandi-  
yár, v, 158

language, vi, 147

defeated by Bahrám Gúí,  
vii, 90, 91

sue for peace, vii, 91

war of Pírúz with, vii, 164  
*seq.*

inroads of, through the  
Caucasus, vii, 238

make submission to Núshír-  
wán, vii, 360

=Turk, viii, 87, 89, 94,  
217

king=Afrásiyáb, ix, 25

Tús, son of Naudar, Íránian hero,  
146-149, 154, 176; i, 90

353, 370; ii, 33, 35, 38,

58, 62, 70, 73, 85, 90, 91,

127, 138, 142, 148, 177,

188, 193, 197, 199, 226,

257, 316, 319, 335, 338,

340, 349, 353 *seq.*, 371,

383, 394; iii, 11, 18, 19,

24, 25, 37 *seq.*, 45 *seq.*, 60,

62, 64, 66 *seq.*, 76, 78, 80,

82 *seq.*, 108, 111 *seq.*, 132

*seq.*, 136 *seq.*, 145, 149

*seq.*, 154, 155, 159, 161,

163, 166, 167, 169, 170,

172, 174, 177 *seq.*, 182,

183, 187, 206, 211, 213

*seq.*, 225, 228, 230, 232,

234, 235, 238, 246, 248,

253, 254, 255, 257, 259,

268, 273, 277, 289, 294,

307, 322, 327, 329; iv, 13,

15, 62, 79, 91, 157, 180,

191, 224, 226, 227, 242,

292, 296, 306 *seq.*; v,

57, 116, 207, 208; viii,

168

Gustaham and, sent by Nau-  
dar to conduct the Íránian  
women to Alburz, i, 351

Tús, Gustaham and, hear of  
Naudar's death, i, 364

passed over in the succession  
i, 369, 370

character of, i, 369

appointed captain of the  
host, ii, 78

taken prisoner in Hámá-  
varán, ii, 90

released by Rustam, ii, 97

goes in search of Kai Káuś,

ii, 104

engaged in the Fight of the  
Seven Warriors, ii, 107

*seq.*

commanded by Kai Káuś to  
hang Rustam and Gív,

ii, 143

encampment of, described,  
ii, 153

summons Rustam to fight  
Suhráb and helps to

saddle Rakhsh, ii, 160

quarrels with Gív over the  
future mother of Siyá-

wush, ii, 194

supersedes Siyáwush, ii, 246  
*seq.*

leads the host home, ii, 258

intercedes for Surkha, ii,  
347

worsted in fight by Afrási-  
yáb, ii, 353

appointed ruler of Chách, ii,  
358

returns to Írán, ii, 362

dispute of, with Gúdarz over  
Kai Khusrau, ii, 400 *seq.*

advocates the claims of Farí-  
burz, ii, 401

asks pardon of Khusrau, ii,  
410

hostility of, to Farúd, iii, 13,  
51, 62

marches on Kalát, iii, 40

sends chiefs to attack Farúd,  
iii, 47 *seq.*

Bahrám's remonstrance  
with, iii, 51

horse of, slain by Farúd, iii,  
56

Tús, resolves to attack Kalát, iii, 62  
 remorse of, for the death of Farúd, iii, 67  
 builds a charnel for Farúd, Rívníz, and Zarásp, iii, 68  
 marches from Kalát, iii, 68  
 defeats Tazháv, iii, 77  
 occupies Giravgard, iii, 78  
 defeated by the Turkmans, iii, 82  
 deprived of his command, iii, 83  
 Kai Khusrau's wrath with, iii, 84, 111, 112  
 superseded, iii, 86  
 returns to Kai Khusrau, iii, 86  
 disgraced, iii, 86  
 imprisoned, iii, 87  
 pardoned, iii, 114  
 challenges Pírán to battle, iii, 117  
 joins battle with Pírán, iii, 118, 126  
 parleys with Húmán, iii, 121  
 plays to be delivered from the snowstorm, iii, 128  
 retreats to Mount Hamáwan, iii, 132  
 makes a night-attack upon Pírán, iii, 139  
 harangues the host, iii, 141  
 hears of the approach of succours, iii, 159  
 takes counsel with the host, iii, 167  
 arrays the host, iii, 169  
 chiefs and, take counsel with Rustam, iii, 172  
 Rustam's wrath with, iii, 234  
 collects the spoil, iii, 235  
 worsted by Púládward, iii, 257  
 leads a host to Khárazm, iv, 61  
 son of = Zarásp, iv, 135  
 made overseer of the host, iv, 149

Tús, posted on Khusrau's right, iv, 146  
 takes part in the siege of Gang-bihisht, iv, 199  
 ordered to prepare for a night-attack from Afrá-siyáb, iv, 224  
 Kai Khusrau remonstrated with by, and other nobles, for refusing audience, iv, 275  
 Gúdarz, and other nobles take counsel, iv, 277  
 audience of, with Kai Khusrau, iv, 283 *seq.*  
 holds with other chiefs, at the bidding of Kai Khusrau, an assembly on the plain, iv, 291 *seq.*  
 Kai Khusrau's gifts to, iv, 295, 300  
 asks for further recognition from Kai Khusrau, iv, 299  
 retains the charge of Káwa's flag and receives Khurásán, iv, 300  
 sets out with Kai Khusrau on his pilgrimage, iv, 306  
 refuses to turn back when bidden by Kai Khusrau, iv, 307  
 Kai Khusrau farewells and warns, and his comrades, iv, 308  
 disappears and is sought in vain by, and his comrades, iv, 308  
 end of, iv, 309  
 Tús, city, now in ruins, north of Mashad in Khurásán, i, 39; v, 28; vi, 393; ix, 90, 95  
 birthplace of Firdausí, i, 38, 41, 45  
 governor of, i, 39  
 prince of, i, 100, 114  
 legendary origin of, iii, 14  
 legend concerning Firdausí's burial at, iii, 191

- Tús, city, treasure of Kai Káuś called "The Bride" stored at, iv, 295  
 Sâm and the dragon of, v, 202  
 local legend of, vi, 372, 391 *seq.*  
 governor of, ix, 92  
 Tuwurg, Túránian hero, ii, 253  
 Tuwurg, brother of Khán, 173, viii, 364  
 reports flight of Gurđya, viii, 351  
 sent in pursuit, viii, 351  
 parleys with Gurđya, viii, 352  
 Twelve Rukhs (Champions), Battle of the. *See* Rukhs.  
 Signs (Zodiac), vii, 408  
 Tyre, city, vi, 30  
 siege of, vi, 30

## U

- Úlád, a div, 143, ii, 28, 59, 61 ; iv, 296 *note* ; v, 204 *note*  
 Rustam and, ii, 52 *seq.*  
 made king of Mázarán, ii, 76  
 'Umar, Khalifa (A.D. 634-643), i, 11 *seq.*, 67 ; ix, 66 *seq.*, 72, 76, 121  
 founds Basra, ix, 69  
 sends Háshim in pursuit of Yazdagird, ix, 68  
 Nu'mán to fight Yazdagird, ix, 68  
 Sa'ad to invade Írán, ix, 72  
 'Umar Khayyám, Persian poet and scientist (died A.D. 1123), v, 30  
 Ummayyads, Muhammadan dynasty, i, 12, 13  
 Unó, daughter of Alexander the Great in the Pseudo-Calisthenes, vi, 77  
 Ural Mountains, iii, 192  
 Urmuzd, the Good Principle, i, 5, 50, 116 *seq.*, 236, ii, 82, iii, 271, 286, 317, 327 ; iv, 139, 185 ; v, 15 *seq.* ; vi, 55, 362, 372, 387 ; vii, 228, 406 and *note* ; viii, 285 ; ix, 24  
 Unity of, symbolised in the game of nard, vii, 381  
 day, i, 88 ; iii, 323 ; vi, 302 and *note*, 306, 375  
 Urmuzd, Ashkánian (Parthian) king, vi, 197, 210  
 Urmuzd, son of Shápúr, Sháh (Hormisdas I), 161, 162, vi, 3, 257, 273, 280, 313, 327  
 discovery of, by Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 257, 271  
 birth of, vi, 271  
 counselled by Ardshír Pápakán, vi, 280  
 Shápúr, vi, 299  
 Reign of, 162, vi, 301 *seq.*  
 Note on, vi, 301  
 title of, vi, 301  
 story about, vi, 301  
 Urmuzd, son of Narsí, Sháh (Hormisdas II), 162, vi, 3, 294, 295, 307, 315, 316, 325 ; vii, 359 ; viii, 41  
 Reign of, vi, 318 *seq.*  
 Note on, vi, 318  
 sons of, vi, 318  
 inaugural address of, vi, 318  
 pregnant wife of, enthroned, vi, 320  
 Urmuzd (Hormisdas), son of Urmuzd, Persian Prince, vi, 318, 325  
 referred to (?), vi, 337  
 Urmuzd Ardshír (Ahwáz), city in Khúzistán, vi, 290 and *note*  
 Urmuzd, Íránian warrior, viii, 296  
 Uroscopy, vi, 101, 107, 108  
 Urumiah (Khanjast or Chijast), lake in Ázarbáiján, iv, 136 ; viii, 195  
 Afrásiyáb escapes from Húm into, iv, 262 and *note*



- Ustád, Íránian general, vii, 251  
     commands Núshírwán's  
     right wing, vii, 251  
 Ustád, Íránian warrior, viii, 296  
 Ustukilá, Túránian hero, iv, 182  
     fights with Kai Khusráw, iv,  
     182  
 'Utbi, Al, secretary to Sultán  
     Mahmúd, i, 32  
 'Uthmán, Khalífa, i, 12  
 Utterakuri, a legendary people,  
     vi, 74  
 Uzava (Zav), Sháh, i, 369

## V

- VALE of heroes, vii, 6  
 Valerian (Bazánúsh), Roman  
     Emperor (A.D. 253-260),  
     vi, 323 *seq.*  
     defeat and capture of, by  
     Shápúr son of Ardshír, vi,  
     294, 295  
     memorials of, vi, 295  
     confused with Odenathus,  
     Julian, and Jovian, vi,  
     324 *seq.*  
     death of, in captivity, vi,  
     326  
 Valkash (Vologeses I), Parthian  
     (Ashkánian) king, i, 62, 63  
 Vandaremaini (Andarímán),  
     brother of Arjásp, v, 13  
 Varahran I (Bahrám son of  
     Urmuzd), Sásánian king,  
     vi, 307  
 Varahran II (Bahrám son of  
     Bahrám), Sásánian king,  
     vi, 310  
 Varahran III (Bahrám Bahrámi-  
     yán), Sásánian king, vi,  
     313, 368  
 Varahran IV (Bahrám son of  
     Shápúr), Sásánian king,  
     vi, 313, 368  
 Varahran V (Bahrám Gúr),  
     Sásánian king, vii, 3  
 Vardanes (Bahrám), Parthian  
     (Ashkánian) king, iii, 9  
     *seq.*, 109

- Vardanes, wars of, with Gotarzes,  
     iii, 10, 11  
     assassination of, iii, 10, 11  
     character of, iii, 15  
 Varcngana, the raven, i, 235, 236  
 Vedas, i, 129, 144, 171, 234, 337,  
     ii, 8, 11, 25  
 Vega, star, vii, 245  
 Vendídád, Nask, vii, 188  
     reference to Mazdak in, vii,  
     188  
 Venus, planet, i, 72, 100, 194,  
     276, 303, 322, 332, 339; ii,  
     115, 275, 345; iii, 143,  
     159, 254, 318, 332; v,  
     159; vi, 98, 102, 171, 190,  
     212, 224, 332; vii, 53,  
     151, 263; viii, 152, 359,  
     394, 395; ix, 26, 73  
 Verethraglana, the raven, ii, 25  
 Victory of Victories, The, ix, 69  
 Vídrafsh (Bídrafsh), v, 24, 26  
 Village-chief, 154  
 Vineyards, taxes on, vii, 215, 225  
 Virgo, constellation, iii, 24; viii,  
     359; ix, 71  
 Vishtásp (Vistaspa, Gushtásp,  
     *q.v.*), v, 24  
 Vistaspa (Vishtásp, Gushtásp,  
     *q.v.*), iv, 316; v, 11  
 Vistásp-sást, v, 11  
 Vitriified fortifications, vi, 79, 165  
 Vivanghat, i, 129  
 Vohúman. *See* Vohu Manau.  
 Vohu Manau (Vohúman, Bah-  
     man), ameshaspenta, iii,  
     271; v, 16, 17  
 Volga, river of European Russia,  
     falling into the Caspian,  
     iv, 316  
 Vologeses I (Valkash), Parthian  
     (Ashkánian) king (A.D. 51  
     -77), i, 62, 63  
 Vologeses II, Parthian (Ashká-  
     nian king), i, 19  
 Vologeses (Balásh), king of Kir-  
     mán, *temp.* Ardshír Pápa-  
     kán, vi, 205  
 Vologeses (Balásh), Sháh, vii, 170  
 Vonones I, Parthian (Ashkánian)  
     king (A.D. 8-12)

Vouru-Kasha, sea, iv, 137  
 Viitra, demon, ii, 25  
     Indra and, vi, 203  
 Vullers-Landauer edition of the  
     Sháhnáma, i, 77; vi, 60

## W

Wair, region, iii, 177, 228, 235  
 Wakkás, father of Sa'ad *q.v.*,  
     176; ix, 72, 78, 82, 90  
 Wálid, Khalífa, vi, 325  
 Walnuts, taxes on, vii, 225  
 War of the Religion, v, 19, 26, 29  
     two campaigns of, v, 29  
 Warázád, king of Sipanjáb, 146,  
     ii, 341 *seq.*, 346  
 Warígh (Callinicus, Kálíniyús,  
     *q.v.*, Nicephorium, Rakka)  
     city, viii, 188, 253, 257,  
     280  
     Khusrau Parwíz takes up his  
     abode at, viii, 257  
 Warriors, the Seven, Story of the  
     Fight of, 143, ii, 25, 82,  
     107 *seq.*  
 Warstead = Bldád, iii, 245  
 Wash, city, viii, 24 and *note*  
 Water, scarcity of, i, 3  
     —courses, underground, i, 3  
     —horse, 163, vi, 373, 392  
     referred to, vi, 373  
     legend of Yazdagird and  
     the, vi, 392  
     —stealing demons, i, 7, 338  
     of Life, 160, v, 30; vi, 159,  
     160  
 Wazír (minister), piece in chess,  
     vii, 385, 423  
     position of, vii, 388, 422  
     move of, vii, 422  
 West, Dr. E. W., referred to, v,  
     11  
 West, the, Salm's portion of the  
     world, i, 189  
     gateway of, viii, 369 and  
     *note*  
 Western sea, the, 160, vi, 158  
 Whale, mistaken for an island,  
     vi, 71, 147

Whale, Sikandar's adventure  
     with a, vi, 71, 147  
 Wheeler, James Talboys, quoted,  
     vi, 81  
 Whip, Bahrám Gúr's, vii, 47, 54,  
     63, 64  
     object of reverence, vii, 47,  
     54, 63  
 White Castle (Mount Sipand,  
     *q.v.*), stronghold north-  
     west of Nishápúr, 144, i,  
     369; ii, 118, 131, 138  
     Malcolm's identification  
     and description of, 1,  
     236; v, 30  
     besieged by Bármán, 1,  
     354  
     evacuated by Gazhdaham  
     ii, 137  
     Dív, 143. *See* Dív.  
     Elephant, 141. *See* Elephant.  
     Huns (Haitálians, *q.v.*), 1, 20  
 Will, of Alexander the Great, vi,  
     81  
     provisions of, vi, 81, 181  
     Kubád, son of Pírúz, vii, 210  
 Wine-drinking, forbidden by  
     Bahrám Gúr, vii, 23  
     again permitted, vii, 25  
     Firdausí's love of. *See* Fir-  
     dausí.  
 Wísa, Túránian hero, uncle of  
     Afrásiyáb, 142, i, 92, 337,  
     342, 353, 361, 362; ii, 112  
     354; iii, 79, 102, 105, 121,  
     197, 202, 206; iv, 32, 39,  
     50, 54, 55, 74, 84, 95, 99,  
     103, 113, 115, 122  
     pursues Káran, i, 355  
     finds Bármán dead, i, 356  
     defeated by Káran, i, 357  
     returns to Afrásiyáb, i, 357  
     sayings of, iv, 32  
 Wisagird, city in Túrán, 151, iv,  
     19, 20, 65; vii, 157, 331.  
 Wisdom, praise of, vii, 103  
     Firdausí's, 139  
     referred to, vii, 278  
     —literature, Persian, vii, 278  
     *seq.*, viii, 3  
     Mohl on, vii, 280

- Wisdom, literature, Noldeke on, vii, 281  
 apportionment of, viii, 202  
 Witch, 143, 156. *See* Sorceress.  
 Wizard-land, vii, 120 and *note*  
 Wolf, 154, 156, 165, vii, 121 *seq.* and *note*  
   slain by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 123  
   of Fâskún. *See* Fâskún.  
 Women, City of, 160. *See* Harûm.  
 Wonders, 160, iv, 245  
   the Four, of Kaid, 159. *See* Kaid.  
 World, on the making of the, 139  
 Worm, the, 161, vi, 195, 206, 238 *seq.*  
   Story of, 161; vi, 196, 203 *seq.*, 232 *seq.*  
   Mohl, Noldeke, and Darmesteter on, vi, 203 *seq.*  
   cult of, vi, 235  
   Ardshîr Pâpakân's stratagem against, vi, 242  
   servants of, vi, 242 *seq.*  
 Writing, art of, taught by the divs to Tahmûras, i, 127

## X

- XERXES, Persian king (B.C. 485-465), v, 282  
 Asfandiyâr and, v, 282  
 effigy of, falls, vi, 30

## Y

- YÂJÚJ and MÂJÚJ (Gog and Magog, *q.v.*), 160, vi, 79, 163 *seq.*, 211 *note*  
 legend of, in the Kurân, vi, 78  
   Tabarî on, vi, 78  
   described, vi, 163  
 Ya'kûb bin Laïs, Persian chieftain and founder of the Saffârî dynasty, i, 67, 68  
 Ya'kûbî, Arabic historian (died A.D. 891)

- Yalân-sîna (Mardânsihâh), brother of Bahrâm Chûbîna, viii, 74, 102, 122, 135, 138, 157, 163, 169, 204, 288, 291, 296 *seq.*, 303, 316, 356, 357; ix, 6  
 goes hunting with Bahrâm Chûbîna, viii, 156  
 pursues and brings back archscribe viii, 159  
 speech of, viii, 165, 170  
 worsted by Khusrau Parwîz, viii, 229  
 commands the centre, viii, 289  
 Bahrâm Chûbîna makes, his mandatory, viii, 342  
 defeats the Turks, viii, 353  
 negotiates marriage between Gurdaya and Gustaham, viii, 357  
 Yama. *See* Yima.  
 Yaman (Hâmâvarân), southwestern Arabia, 140, 160, 162, i, 181 *seq.*, 266, 286; ii, 80; iv, 146; v, 260; vi, 73, 120, 121, 324, 331, 385, 386, 396, 401; vii, 262; viii, 98  
 king of=Sarv, 140, i, 178, 179, 182  
 Yaman, carnelians of, ii, 123; iii, 289  
 Canopus of, ii, 203; iii, 297; vi, 382  
 onyx of, vi, 128  
 striped stuff of, vi, 175  
 monarch of, vi, 175; viii, 16  
   gives gifts to Sikandar, vi, 175  
   =Munzir, vi, 378, 387, 390  
 Bahrâm Gúr goes to, vi, 378, 390  
 conquered by Persians, viii, 24 *note*  
   curtains of, viii, 148, 151  
 Yânús (Julian), brother of Cæsar, 162, vi, 324, 326

Yánuš, leads a host against Shápúr, vi, 351  
 defeated, vi, 352  
 Yasht XXII, metrical para-  
 phrase of, vii, 318  
 Yátkár-i-Zarírán, Pahlaví text,  
 v, 13, 24, 27 and *note*; vii,  
 380  
   compared with Dakfí's  
   work, v, 24 *seq.*  
   resembles Kárnámak, vi,  
   195, 196  
 Yazates (Izads), the, iii, 286  
 Yazd, city in central Persia, vi,  
 368  
 Yazdagird, son of Shápúr, Sháh  
 (Isdigerd I), 163, 164, vi,  
 3; vii, 4, 10, 109, 119,  
 171, 185, 359  
   referred to, vi, 369; vii,  
   74  
   Reign of, 163, vi, 371 *seq.*  
   Note on, vi, 371 *seq.*  
   parentage of, uncertain, vi,  
   371  
   lover of peace like Aknaton  
   of Egypt, vi, 371  
   titles of, vi, 371, 372  
   Tabarí on, vi, 372, 373  
   coins of, vi, 373  
   evil administration of, vi,  
   374, 404  
   makes search for a governor  
   for his son Bahrám Gúr,  
   vi, 376 *seq.*  
 Nu'mán and Munzir visit,  
 vi, 377  
   puts Bahrám Gúr in Mun-  
   zir's charge, vi, 378  
   receives from Munzir a pic-  
   ture of Bahrám Gúr shoot-  
   ing, vi, 385  
   Bahrám Gúr returns to, vi,  
   386  
   gives presents to, and sends  
   a letter by, Nu'mán to  
   Munzir, vi, 387  
   disgraces Bahrám Gúr, vi,  
   389  
   sends Bahrám Gúr back to  
   Munzir, vi, 390

Yazdagird, consults the astrolo-  
 gers, vi, 390  
   death of foretold, vi, 391  
   attacked by bleeding of the  
   nose, vi, 390  
   death of, vi, 373, 393  
   Nöldeke on, vi, 373  
   corpse of embalmed and  
   taken to Párs, vi, 393  
 Yazdagird, son of Bahrám Gúr  
 (Isdigerd II), Sháh, 166,  
 vi, 3; vii, 4, 152, 156, 160,  
 187  
   welcomes his father on his  
   return from Hind, vii,  
   137  
   appointed by Bahrám Gúr  
   to succeed him, vii, 150  
   Reign of, 166, vii, 153 *seq.*  
   Note on, vii, 153  
   a blank in Sháhnáma, vii,  
   153  
   historically important, vii,  
   153  
   wars of, vii, 153  
   fortifies passes in the Cau-  
   casus, vii, 153, 187  
   title of, vii, 153  
   sons of, vii, 153  
   appoints Hurmuz to suc-  
   ceed him, vii, 155  
   dies, vii, 155  
 Yazdagird (Isdigerd III), Sháh,  
 176, v, 294; vi, 3; viii,  
 55, 73; ix, 5, 61, 64 *seq.*,  
 68 *seq.*, 72, 81, 90, 101,  
 105, 106, 113, 115, 116, 122  
   Reign and Era of, 176, ix,  
   64  
   Note on, ix, 64  
   taken for safety to Istakhr,  
   ix, 64  
   age of, at accession, ix, 65  
   difficult position of, ix, 65  
 Yazdagird, historical importance  
   of reign of, ix, 65  
   flight of, from Ctesiphon, ix,  
   67  
   Hulwán, ix, 68  
   last attempt of, to recover  
   his empire, ix, 68

Yazdagird, concentrates his forces at Nahāvand, ix, 68  
 defeated and a fugitive, ix, 69  
 death of, referred to, ix, 69  
 host returns to, after Kādisīya, ix, 85  
 hears of Rustam's death, ix, 85  
 quits Baghdād, ix, 88  
 makes for Marv, ix, 89  
   entrusted to Māhwī by Farrukhzād, ix, 95, 96  
 at Marv, ix, 97, 116  
 hears of the coming of the Turks, ix, 97  
 betrayed by Māhwī, ix, 98  
 defeated, ix, 98, 116  
 miller and, ix, 99 *seq.*  
 described, ix, 99, 101  
 Māhwī bids miller slay, ix, 107, 116  
 slain, stripped and flung into stream, ix, 108, 109 and *note*  
 corpse of, recovered, lamented over and entombed, ix, 109 *seq.*  
 Firdausī on, ix, 111  
 Yazdagird, chief scribe, *temp.*  
   Núshírwán, vii, 304, 307, 312, 333, 337, 339, 391  
 discourse of, vii, 305  
 questions Búzurjmíhr, vii, 308  
 Yazdán, viii, 75  
 Yazdánbakhsh (Áyín Gashasp *q.v.*), viii, 75, 76  
 Yazdán, viii, 195, 196  
 Year, New, festival at, i, 104  
 Yima (Yama, Jamshíd), i, 7, 130, 374  
   legend of, i, 129  
 Yokel, a, 164  
   entertains Bahrám Gúr, vii, 43 *seq.*  
   wife of, her converse with Bahrám Gúr, vii, 45  
   presage of, vii, 46  
   rewarded by Bahrám Gúr, vii, 48

Youths, two, bid Ardshír Pápakán not to tarry in his flight from Ardawán, vi, 201, 222  
 Youths, two, entertain and counsel Ardshír Pápakán in the matter of the Worm, vi, 207, 239 *seq.*  
   help Ardshír Pápakán to slay the Worm, vi, 242, 244  
 Yudhishthira, eldest of the five Pándavas, iv, 138  
   renunciation of the world, and pilgrimage to heaven of, compared with that of Kai Khusráu, iv, 138  
 Yúnán, vi, 95 and *note*, viii, 258  
   Faith of, vi, 95

## Z

ZÁR, lesser, tributary of Tigris, viii, 189  
 Zábul, Zábulistán = Nímruz = Sístán,<sup>1</sup> 141, 142, 144, 156; i, 248, 252, 254, 264, 282, 324, 332, 357, 361, 364, 366, 367, 371, 375, 381; ii, 21, 28, 42, 61, 83, 92, 126, 138, 141, 142, 156, 168, 227, 228, 245, 260, 338, 362, 363; iii, 14, 134, 141, 145, 153, 165, 171, 174, 175, 186, 190, 199, 200, 202, 206 *seq.*, 217, 246, 250, 269, 274, 321, 326, 342, 347, 354, 356; iv, 147, 279, 283, 296, 311; v, 85, 86, 167, 169 *seq.*, 173, 175 *seq.*, 181 *seq.*, 193, 194, 212, 215, 219, 223, 224, 235, 248, 251, 252, 255, 256, 258, 265, 266, 273, 275 *seq.*, 281, 283, 285 *seq.*; vi, 207; vii, 173, 174, 193; viii, 369; ix, 75  
   invaded by Shamásas and Khazarwán, i, 345, 358

<sup>1</sup> Not the same apparently as those above.<sup>2</sup> See p. 333 *note*.

Zábul, vintage of, ii, 110  
 occupied by the Turkmans,  
 i, 10; iii, 14, 30  
 Gushtásp goes to, v, 85  
 Moon of=Rúdába, v, 190  
 and *note*  
 called "Babblestead" by  
 Asfandiyár, v, 216  
 Bahman's sojourn in, v, 252,  
 256  
 pillaged by Bahman, v, 287  
 Bahman quits, v, 290  
 Zábulf, a native of Zábul, iii,  
 188, 201, 257, 326; v, 212  
 a, made king of Kábul, v,  
 277  
 Zál Farrukh, suggests Bahrám  
 Chúbina to Hurnuzd,  
 viii, 99  
 speech of, viii, 241  
 Zádsham, king of Túrán and  
 grandfather of Afrásiyáb, i,  
 92, 342 *seq.*, 376; iv, 149,  
 163, 166, 203  
 offspring of Afrásiyáb, iv,  
 178  
 Zagros, mountain-range in wes-  
 tern Irán, viii, 189  
 Zahrák (Azhi Daháka), son of  
 Mardás, Arab king and  
 Sháh, 140, 141; i, 42, 90,  
 91; ii, 33, 81, 318; iii,  
 257; iv, 89, 206, 272, 274,  
 290; v, 12, 180, 203, 204,  
 284; vi, 15, 45, 172, 209,  
 240 and *note*; vii, 185,  
 199; viii, 218, 239, 241,  
 387, 391; ix, 25, 65,  
 103  
 protagonist of idolatry and  
 of the Semitic race, i, 54,  
 143, 226, 256  
 one of the Zoroastrian triad  
 of evil, i, 59 and *note*  
 referred to by Moses of Cho-  
 rene, i, 72, 144  
 Story of, 140, i, 135 *seq.*  
 tempted by Iblís, i, 136 *seq.*  
 father of, 140  
 murdered by, i, 137  
 referred to, viii, 387

Zahrák, becomes king of the  
 Arabs, i, 137  
 serpents grow out of the  
 shoulders of, i, 139  
 Iblís' advice to, i, 139  
 invades Irán, i, 139  
 captures and slays Jamshíd,  
 i, 140  
 Reign of, 140, i, 141, *seq.*  
 Note on, i, 141, *seq.*  
 not destroyed, i, 143  
 feast in celebration of over-  
 throw of, i, 143  
 dream of, i, 147  
 Arnawáz' advice to, con-  
 cerning, i, 148  
 takes counsel with the archi-  
 mages, i, 149  
 warned by Zírak, i, 149  
 seeks for Farídún, i, 150  
 slays Abtín, i, 151, 153  
 Birmáya, i, 152  
 burns Farídún's palace, i,  
 152, 158  
 Káwa and, Story of, 140, i,  
 154 *seq.*  
 Káwa revolts against, i, 156  
 Farídún resolves to war  
 with, i, 157  
 marches against, i, 159  
 capital of, i, 161  
 entered by Farídún, i, 161  
 talisman of, overthrown by  
 Farídún, i, 161  
 sought for in vain by Farí-  
 dún, i, 162  
 minister of, 140, i, 164 *seq.*  
 hears from Kundrav of Farí-  
 dún's doings, i, 165  
 goes to fight with Farídún,  
 i, 166  
 enters his palace, i, 167  
 overthrown by Farídún, i,  
 168  
 Surúsh's counsel to Farídún  
 concerning, i, 168, 169  
 fettered to Mount Damá-  
 wand, i, 169  
 future final destruction of,  
 i, 173  
 saying of, ii, 171 and *note*

Zahhák, an Aryan myth, ix, 65  
 king of Babylon, ix, 65  
 an Arab, ix, 65  
 Zalûr, Iránian hero, iv, 148  
 commands the Bedouins in  
 Kai Khusrau's army, iv,  
 148  
 Zainigûr, Zainigáv, ii, 81  
 Zairi-vairi (Zariadres, Zarír, *q.v.*),  
 iv, 316; v, 12  
 Zál (Dástán, Dástán-i-Sám, Dás-  
 tán-i-Zand, Zál-i-zai), son  
 of Sám and father of  
 Rustam, 141, 142, 153,  
 154, 156, 157; i, 145, 235,  
 384, 387; ii, 4, 11 *seq.*,  
 18, 19, 21, 33 *seq.*, 49, 58,  
 61, 62, 69, 77, 140, 168,  
 169, 180, 182, 227, 228,  
 271, 286, 290, 318, 319,  
 338, 362, 371; iii, 8, 17,  
 18, 21, 22, 35, 121, 132,  
 138, 141, 147, 190, 202,  
 221, 245, 269, 274, 279,  
 283, 307, 321, 322, 325,  
 328, 331, 347, 351, 354,  
 355; iv, 13, 147, 222, 251,  
 277, 319; v, 11, 14, 15,  
 58, 86, 169, 173 *seq.*, 197,  
 200, 204, 210, 212, 219  
*seq.*, 231, 240 *seq.*, 246,  
 255, 256, 261, 277 *seq.*,  
 281, 283, 290; vi, 79;  
 viii, 223; ix, 25  
 various names of, i, 84, 245  
 and *note*, 248 and *note*  
 born with white hair, i,  
 240  
 cast away by Sám, i, 241  
 found and brought up by  
 the Simurgh, i, 242  
 seen by a caravan, i,  
 242  
 informed of his parentage by  
 the Simurgh, i, 245  
 given a feather by the  
 Simurgh, i, 246  
 restored to Sám by the  
 Simurgh, i, 247  
 goes with Sám to court, i,  
 249

Zál, horoscope of, taken, i, 251  
 made regent of Zábul by  
 Sám, i, 253  
 progress of, in the arts, i, 255  
 makes a progress through  
 his realm, i, 256  
 Rúdába and, story of, i, 257  
*seq.*  
 referred to, iii, 285  
 hears of, and falls in love  
 with Mihráb's daughter,  
 i, 257 *seq.*  
 described, i, 260, 268  
 sees Rúdába's handmaids,  
 i, 263  
 interview of, with Rúdába's  
 handmaids, i, 266  
 invited to visit Rúdába, i,  
 267, 269  
 goes to Rúdába, i, 270 *seq.*  
 plights his troth to Rúdába,  
 i, 272  
 consults the archimages on  
 the matter of Rúdába, i,  
 273  
 writes to Sám, i, 275  
 go-between of, with Rúdába,  
 i, 280  
 sends Sám's letter to Rú-  
 dába, i, 280  
 goes to plead his cause with  
 Sám, i, 292  
 bears a letter of appeal from  
 Sám to Minúchihr, i, 295  
 well received by Minú-  
 chihr, i, 306  
 astrologer's presage con-  
 cerning, i, 307  
 questioned by the arch-  
 images, i, 308  
 answers the archimages, i,  
 309  
 displays his accomplishment  
 before Minúchihr, i, 311  
 returns to Sám, i, 316  
 goes with Sám to Kábul, i,  
 317  
 felicitated by Sám, i, 318  
 married to Rúdába, i, 318  
 and Rúdába go to Sístán, i,  
 319

Zál, left regent of Sístán by Sám  
 i, 319  
 summons the Símurgh to  
 succour Rúdába, i, 320  
 goes with Rustam and Mihráb  
 to meet Sám, i, 324  
 bids Rustam take Mount  
 Sipand, i, 329  
 hears of Rustam's success,  
 i, 332  
 bids Rustam destroy the  
 hold of Mount Sipand, i,  
 333  
 informs Sám of Rustam's  
 exploit, i, 334  
 buries Sám, i, 358  
 hears from Mihráb that  
 Shamásás and Khazarwán  
 are invading Zábulistán,  
 i, 359  
 goes to the help of Mihráb,  
 i, 359  
 shoots arrows into the ene-  
 mies' camp, i, 359  
 slays Khazarwán, i, 360  
 wounds Kulbád, i, 361  
 puts Shamásás to flight, i,  
 361  
 hears of the death of  
 Naudar, i, 364  
 fights with Afrásiyáb, i,  
 368  
 proposes the election of a  
 new Sháh, i, 370  
 reproached by the Írán-  
 ians, i, 375  
 reply of, i, 375  
 bids Rustam prepare for  
 war, i, 376  
 gives Sám's mace to Rus-  
 tam, i, 378  
 collects horses for Rustam,  
 i, 378  
 marches against Afrásiyáb,  
 i, 381  
 urges the Íránians to choose  
 a Sháh, i, 381  
 sends Rustam to summon  
 Kai Kubád, i, 382  
 goes to do homage to Kai  
 Khusrau, iii, 17

Zál, witnesses Kai Khusrau's  
 oath to avenge Siyáwush,  
 iii, 22  
 son of = Rustam, iii, 132  
 meets Giv, iii, 321  
 sayings of, iii, 316, 351  
 summoned by the Íránians  
 to remonstrate with Kai  
 Khusrau, iv, 278  
 sets out for Írán with Rus-  
 tam and sages, iv, 279  
 met on arrival by Gúdarz  
 and other chiefs, iv, 282  
 holds converse with the  
 Íránians, iv, 282  
 audience of, with Kai Khus-  
 rau, iv, 283 *seq.*  
 asks pardon of Kai Khus-  
 rau, iv, 290  
 holds, with other chiefs, at  
 the bidding of Kai Khus-  
 rau, an assembly on the  
 plain, iv, 291 *seq.*  
 Kai Khusrau's gift to, iv,  
 295  
 companions of, rewarded by  
 Kai Khusrau, iv, 297  
 returns thanks, iv, 298  
 protests against Luhrásp's  
 succession, iv, 301  
 acknowledges Luhrásp as  
 Sháh, iv, 302  
 sets out with Kai Khusrau  
 on his pilgrimage, iv,  
 306  
 turns back at the bidding of  
 Kai Khusrau, iv, 307  
 laments the loss of the pala-  
 dins and returns to Írán,  
 iv, 310  
 promises fealty to Luhrásp,  
 iv, 311  
 Rustam and, welcome Gush-  
 tásp to Sístán, v, 85  
 hears of Bahman's ap-  
 proach, v, 182  
 interview of, with Bahman,  
 v, 183  
 give Bahman a guide to  
 conduct him to Rustam,  
 v, 184



Zál, Rúdába and, bidden by Rustam to prepare to receive Asfandiyár, v, 190  
 Rustam recounts his interview with Asfandiyár to, v, 196  
 Rustam and, vilified by Asfandiyár, v, 201  
 receives a message from Rustam by Zawára, v, 230  
 grieves over Rustam's wounds, v, 234  
 summons the Simurgh to Rustam's aid, v, 235  
 goes to Rustam and Asfandiyár, v, 247  
 forebodes Rustam's future, v, 247  
 father of Shaghád, v, 260, 263  
 sends Shaghád to be brought up at Kábul, v, 264  
 laments for Rustam, v, 273  
 sends Farámarz against Kábul, v, 274  
 bids Rúdába to cease to mourn for Rustam, v, 278  
 receives and replies to Bahman's hostile message, v, 285  
 goes to meet Bahman, v, 286  
 palace of, sacked, v, 286  
 Bishútan intercedes for, v, 288  
 released and returns to his palace, v, 289  
 Zál-i-zar (Zál, *q.v.*), i, 84, 248 and *note*  
 Zam (now Karkhí), town on the left bank of the Oxus between Ámwí (Charjui) and Tirmid, where, there was a crossing-place, ii, 394, 395; iv, 65, 157; vii, 359  
 = Oxus, ii, 97  
 Zamyád, Yasht, i, 338  
 Zamzam, iv, 258 *note*

Zand, comment, i, 65  
 Zandavasta, i, 116, 129, 144, 171 *seq.*, 231, 337, 338, 369; ii, 8, 25 *seq.*, 81, 118, 189, 190; iii, 8; iv, 151, 228, 253, 259, 308; v, 11 *seq.*, 30, 36, 41, 43, 51, 82, 85, 100, 173, 176, 216, 241, 294, 299, 309; vi, 17, 55, 226, 252, 343, 356; vii, 200, 207, 283, 302; viii, 96, 246, 283, 312  
 traditional origin of, i, 61  
   discussed, i, 62  
 language of, i, 63 *seq.*  
 meaning of, i, 65  
 origin of chief characters in, i, 65  
 diffusion of traditions in, i, 65  
 extant portions of, i, 70  
   *note*  
 quoted, i, 99, 130, 141, 142, 172, 235, 369; viii, 218, 240  
 sent by Gushtásp to every clime, v, 77  
 burnt by the Turkmans at Balkh, v, 92  
 passage from, metrically paraphrased, vii, 318  
 Zanga, Íránian hero, 145, 151, ii, 73, 90, 228, 249, 271, 318; iii, 20, 34, 43, 45, 48, 67, 92, 115, 350; iv, 13, 15, 24, 105, 147  
 takes part in the Fight of the Seven Warriors, ii, 107 *seq.*  
 accompanies Siyáwush against Afrásiyáb, ii, 226  
 sent on an embassy to Afrásiyáb, ii, 250 *seq.*  
 goes with Rustam to rescue Bizhan, iii, 334  
 opposes Farshidward, iv, 83  
 chosen to fight Akhást, iv, 97  
 slays Akhást, iv, 106

- Zanga, Kai Khusrau remonstrated with by, and other nobles, for refusing audience, iv, 275
- Zangúla *or* Zangula, Túránian hero, 151, iv, 26  
chosen to fight with Furúhil, iv, 97  
slain by Furúhil, iv, 101
- Zarang, former capital of Sístán, situated some twenty miles from the north-eastern shores of Lake Zirih, i, 4
- Zarár, vi, 200
- Zarasp, son of Minúchihr, i, 248; iv, 147 (?)<sup>1</sup>  
kindred of<sup>1</sup>, go to the temple of Ázargashasp, iv, 270  
go to meet Zál and Rustam, iv, 282  
go with Zarír to Rúm, iv, 360
- Zarásp *or* Zarasp, son of Tús, 147, iii, 24, 54, 57, 59, 60, 67, 72, 113, 114; iv, 135  
goes against Farúd, iii, 53  
referred to, iii, 55; iv, 149  
burial of, iii, 68
- Zarasp, treasurer of Kai Khusrau, iv, 269  
makes gifts to Ázargashasp, iv, 269
- Zarasp, Iranian hero, iv, 180, 301
- Zarathustra, Zarathushtra. *See* Zarduhsht.
- Zarduhsht (Zarathushtra, Zoroaster), prophet, law-giver, and evangelist of ancient Írán, 155, i, 53, 116, 235, 236; ii, 8, 9; iv, 272; v, 9 *seq.*, 23 *seq.*, 27, 28, 42, 51, 77, 173, 206, 216, 217, 241, 255; vi, 55, 252, 328; vii, 9, 207, 264, 318; viii, 67, 213, 308  
Zandavasta revealed to, i, 61  
title of a line of priest-princes, i, 61
- Zurduhsht, account of, i, 62  
meaning of, v, 13  
legend of, v, 14 *seq.*  
converts Gushtásp, v, 18, 33  
success of evangel of, v, 34  
plants the Cypress of Kishmar,, v, 27, 34  
advises Gushtásp not to pay tribute to Arjásp, v, 35  
referred to, v, 36, 38, 41  
slain at Balkh, v, 92, 93  
amulet given to Asfandiyár by, v, 130  
religion of, under the Sásánian empire, vi, 251  
girdle of, v, 16; vi, 332 *note*.  
Fire-fane of, vii, 139  
high priest of, converts Sapínúd, vii, 139  
saying of, viii, 218, 240
- Zarduhsht, high priest, 170, viii, 81  
visits Ízid Gashasp in prison, viii, 82  
visit of, reported to Hurmuzd, viii, 83  
poisoned by Hurmuzd, viii, 83 *seq.*
- Zariadres (Zairi-vairi, Zarír, *q.v.*), v, 26  
legend of, iv, 314 *seq.*
- Zarír (Zariadres, Zairi-vairi), brother of Sháh Gushtásp, 154, 155, i, 42; ii, 3; iv, 315, 316, 318, 347; v, 12, 13, 24 *seq.*, 37, 41 *seq.*, 49 *seq.*, 60 *seq.*, 73, 94, 109, 169, 181, 193, 254, 261  
sent by Luhrásp in pursuit of Gushtásp, iv, 320  
charger of, iv, 321  
returns with Gushtásp, iv, 322  
consulted by Luhrásp, iv, 323, 358  
advises Luhrásp, iv, 358  
goes with other chiefs on a mission to Rúm, iv, 359  
reaches Halab, iv, 360

<sup>1</sup> It is not clear which Zarasp is intended.

- Zarír entrusts the host to Bahráam, iv, 360  
 goes to Cæsar's court, iv, 360  
 audience with Cæsar of, and recognition of Gushtásp by, iv, 360  
 gives Luhrásp's answer to Cæsar, iv, 361  
 visited in his camp by Gush-tásp, iv, 361  
 informs Gushtásp of Luhrásp's abdication in his favour, iv, 362  
 Love-story of, v, 26, 27  
 Death-story of, v, 26, 27  
 converted by Zarduhsht, v, 33  
 answers, in conjunction with Asfandiyár and Jámásp, Arjásp's letter, v, 42  
 death of, foretold by Jámásp, v, 51  
 receives the standard and the command of the centre from Gushtásp, v, 55  
 prowess of, v, 61 *seq.*  
 slain by Bídírafsh, v, 63  
 Zarír-náma, v, 26, 27  
 Zark, town south-east of Marv, ix, 98  
 canal of, ix, 98  
 corpse of Yazdagird flung into, ix, 109  
 recovered from, ix, 109  
 ford and toll-house of, ix, 100 and *note*  
 chief of, ix, 100  
 hears from miller about Yazdagird, ix, 109  
 Zarmihr. *See* Rizmihr.  
 Zarnúsh, city in Khúzistán, vi, 35  
 Zartusht Bahráam Pazdhú, author of the Zartusht-náma, v, 18  
 Zartusht-náma, poem, v, 18  
 Zav, Sháh, 142, 143, i, 90, 91, 381; ii, 11, 36; iv, 283  
 Reign of, 142, i, 369 *seq.*  
 Note on, i, 369  
 mentioned in the Zanda-vasta, i, 369  
 Zav, accession of, i, 370  
 drought and famine in the time of, i, 371  
 concludes peace with the Turkmans, i, 371  
 dies, i, 372  
 Zawára, brother of Rustam, 146, 157, ii, 4, 96, 228, 347, 349; iii, 30, 202, 325, 328; iv, 24, 34; v, 173, 174, 182 *seq.*, 187, 191, 231, 260, 261  
 engaged in the Fight of the Seven Warriors, ii, 110 *seq.*  
 worsted by Alkús, ii, 115  
 rescued by Rustam, ii, 115  
 made leader of Rustam's host, ii, 142  
 left in charge of Rustam's host, ii, 161  
 goes on embassy to Húmán, ii, 176  
 safe-conducts Húmán from Írán, ii, 176, 181, 182  
 incites Rustam to avenge Siyáwush, ii, 360  
 given a command, iv, 149  
 goes with Rustam to the right wing, iv, 180  
 referred to, v, 186, 228, 261  
 Farámarz and, sent by Rustam to bid Zál and Rúdába prepare to receive Asfandiyár, v, 190  
 brings Rustam's armour, v, 218  
 put in charge of the troops, v, 222  
 goes with Rustam to the Hírmund, v, 222  
 Rustam's instructions to, v, 222  
 provokes the Íránians to combat, v, 225  
 slays Núsh Ázar, v, 227  
 goes in quest of Rustam, v, 230  
 takes from Rustam a message for Zál, v, 230

- Zawára, grieves over Rustam's wounds, v, 234  
 goes to Rustam and Asfandiyár, v, 247  
 warns Rustam against Bahman, v, 250  
 Rustam and, with small escort, go to Kábul, v, 268  
 goes hunting with Rustam, v, 270  
 falls a victim to treachery, v, 270, 273  
 death of, v, 273  
 body of, taken from the pit by Farámarz, and buried v, 275
- Zend, language, i, 64  
 improper use of term, i, 64
- Zeus, Babylonian, vi, 22  
 oracle of, consulted, vi, 22
- Zhanda Razm, maternal uncle of Suhráb, 144, ii, 149, 151  
 accompanies Suhráb to Írán, ii, 150  
 death of, ii, 150  
 referred to, ii, 160
- Zhangwí, Turkman noble, viii, 331
- Zib-i-Khusrau (Rúmiya, *q.v.*), city, 167, vii, 259
- Zijának, daughter of Ardawán, *q.v.*, 161, vi, 255  
 Story of, in Kárnámak, vi, 255  
 Tabarí, vi, 255  
 Sháhnáma, vi, 259 *seq.*
- Zinígáv, ii, 81
- Zira, father of Gurwí, 152, ii, 295, 314; iii, 120, 197, 199; iv, 97, 99, 127, 219; v, 272
- Zirak, an archimage, i, 150  
 warns Zahhák, i, 149
- Zirih, sea or lake, i, 4; ii, 80; iv, 136  
 the Lake of Sístán, i, iv; ii, 80
- Zirih, son of Sháh Píruz, vii, 170
- Zodiac, viii, 394
- Zoroaster. *See* Zarduhsht.
- Zoroastrian, Zoroastrians, v, 17; vi, 206, 251, 328
- Zoroastrian, cosmogony, i, 5  
 view of Buddhism as idolatrous, i, 16  
 conception of destiny, i, 52  
 propaganda, i, 58 *seq.*  
 triad of evil, i, 59 and *note*  
 scriptures. *See* Zandavasta.  
 calendar, i, 88  
 adopted by Darius Hystaspis, i, 59
- Zoroastrianism, i, 49; vi, 15, 196, 251, 252, 327, 328; vii, 188, 317  
 conceptions of, i, 5, 51, 52  
 original seat of, i, 56 *seq.*, 62  
 becomes the state religion, i, 59  
 declines after Alexander's conquest, i, 60  
 scriptures of, *See* Zandavasta.  
 under the Parthians, i, 60, 63  
 revival of, i, 63  
 based on nature-worship, i, 116  
 existed before Zoroaster, i, 116  
 under the Sásanian empire, vi, 251  
 millenia of, vi, 252
- Zú'l Aktáf, title of Shápúr, son of Urmuzd, 162, vi, 323  
 meaning of, vi, 323
- Zú'lfakar, ii, 337 and *note*
- Zú'l-karnain (Sikandar, Alexander the Great), vi, 51  
 legend of, in Kurán, vi, 78, 84  
 barrier of, vi, 78  
 site of, vi, 79
- Zúr. *See* Gúr.
- Zúrán, Núshírwán's chamberlain, 168  
 envies Mahbúd, vii, 319  
 plots with a Jew against Mahbúd, vii, 320 *seq.*  
 makes confession to Núshírwán, vii, 324